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THE COMICS MAGAZINE • 78

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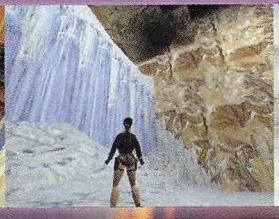

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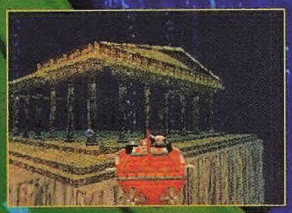

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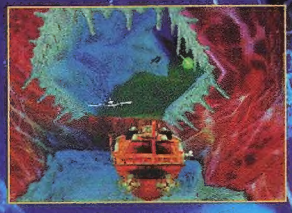

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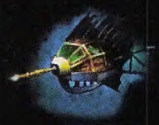

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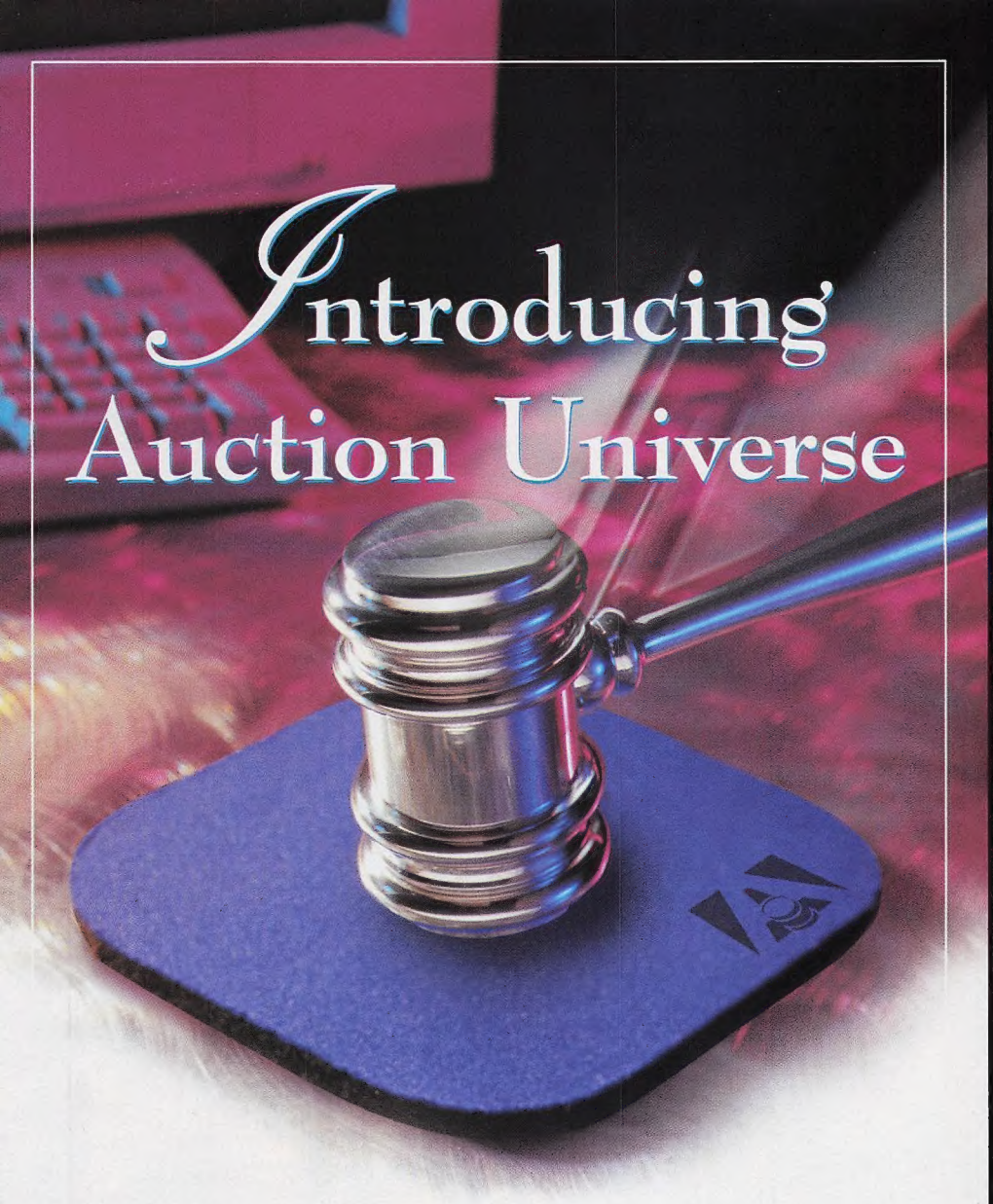

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ON THE COVER

Spider-Man was illustrated by Steve Skroce and colored by Liquid Graphics. Swing to page 52 to see just what the heck's wrong with our friendly neighborhood wall-crawler these days.

Battle Chasers™ & © Joe Madureira. Crimson™ & © Humberto Ramos. Danger Girl™ & © J. Scott Campbell.

The Cliffhanger jam piece was illustrated by Joe Madureira, J. Scott Campbell and Humberto Ramos, and colored by Liquid Graphics and WildStorm. To see what's in store for Image's newest imprint, drop into the roundtable discussion on page 58.

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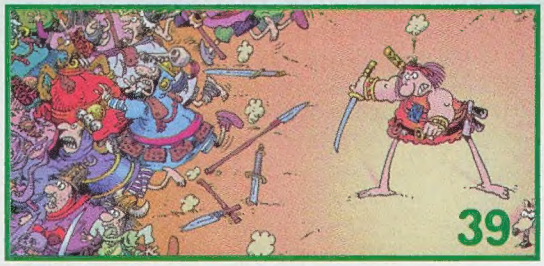

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"It's worth a lot to me!" Here's your *only* chance to get the exclusive *Star Wars: Boba Fett #1/2* comic featuring everyone's favorite bounty hunter! Hunt down page 96 for details.

"EEEWW, GROSS GAREB!"

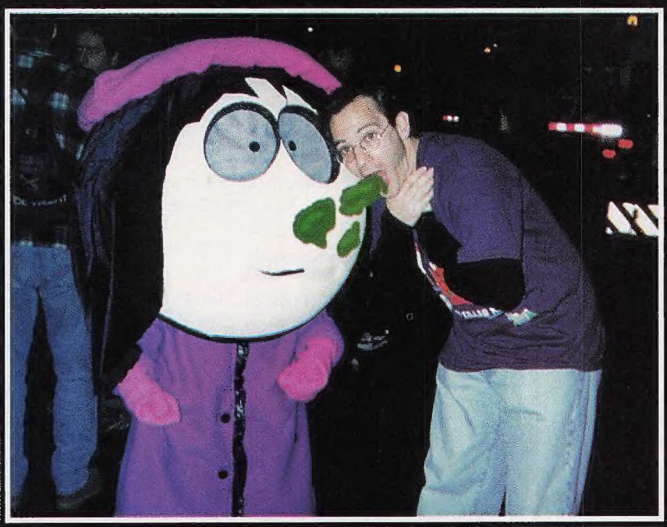

Photo: Linda Galmari

FUN IN THE PARK

As you can see from my picture, I had a run-in with Wendy Testaburger from "South Park" at the Village Halloween parade in New York City. Cartman and I finished a whole box of Cheesy Poofs (which, coincidentally, is the name of my foosball team in the *Wizard* foosball league). I got to meet Kenny, Chef, Sparky and Big Gay Al. What a great time.

Last month I hope you were blown away with the *Earth X* book by Alex Ross. This is a great way for us to enter the new year. Each year that goes by creates a whole new challenge for us. We constantly have to reinvent ourselves. We have to figure out what you really liked and what you didn't, and come up with a new formula to keep you excited about this great and fun industry we're a part of.

By the looks of it, 1998 is already shaping up to be a great year for new ideas, new projects, new editorial features and lots of new really cool inserts. We've been very busy meeting with many publishers trying to lock up lots of exclusive news and pictures to run in *Wizard* in the coming months. We've met with Marvel, DC, most of the Image studios including Top Cow and WildStorm, Awesome, Event and many companies outside of comics in movies, TV, video games and action figures to bring you the latest and the greatest.

This issue kicks off the new year with lots of insight into the new WildStorm imprint Cliffhanger, as we have a roundtable discussion with Joe Madureira, J. Scott Campbell, Humberto Ramos and Jim Lee! You absolutely have to look at our great 101 little-known comic book facts feature, where we tell you all sorts of neat trivia facts. And then there's a look at what makes Spider-Man so cool, as well as a spotlight on Batman's sidekick Robin. Oh yeah, and we finally unveil photos from this year's *Wizard* Halloween party. The costumes were great. I'm sure you'll love them.

As for goodies, we've got a great *Boba Fett* #1/2 offer and an Iron Man Chromium stand up!

1998 is going to be our best year ever. I know you'll think so, too.

See ya,

Gareb S. Shamus

ABC AUDITED

THE WIZARD GUILTY PARTIES

GUILTY PARTIES

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New Year's Resolution More monkeys! More monkeys!

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Stuff you don't ever read...

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BAD

NEW YEAR'S EVIL

8 COMICS THAT WILL SHAKE THE WORLD:

BODY DOUBLES #1
BY ABNETT, LANNING, J. PHILLIPS, AND J. RODRIGUEZ

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MAGIC WORDS

RUMOR MILL

Lotsa letters on various rumors have been coming in lately. Here's some clarification:

• Stan Lee will be returning to write a monthly Spider-Man book: WRONG! Stan the Man only wrote the recently released *Kingpin* one-shot.

• Pie is good food: RIGHT! Everybody loves pie. Everybody.

• "Strip Tease" is now a monthly part of *Wizard*: WRONG! Before this month's "Groo" comic strip, we ran an original "Sam and Max" strip in issue #75 and a "Quantum and Woody" one in #76. They've been very well-received, and we're looking to do some more in the future, but "Strip Tease" ain't quite monthly.

• *Witchblade* co-writer Christina Z. (right) is one hot tamale: STRICTLY SUBJECTIVE! It's all a matter of opinion. But she *is* single these days. Let your imagination run wild...

Letter time...

Dear Mr. McLauchlin,

In the spring comes a very special time for high school seniors across America: graduation! We, the undersigned, graduated from high school last spring. Like many others across the nation, we took part in decorating our graduation caps. But on our caps, we didn't write the usual mundane statements such as "C-YA" or "Thanks, Mom & Dad." Instead, we used the less-common superhero emblem decorating technique.

We are all avid comic book readers and huge fans of *Wizard*, and we would like nothing more than to share our graduation day and our love for comic books with other fans via your wonderful magazine. So enjoy the picture. We hope you and the staff get a kick out of it.

Mark Doyle (Batman),
Joseph Brack (Robin),
Andrew Kenealy (Spider-Man),
Robert Munstis (Superman)
Whitman, MA

Consider us duly kicked. And thanks for the photo. Now report to college for your fraternity hazing!

Dear Jim,

I've got an ass-load of questions. So grab a beer, turn off the TV and make yourself comfortable. Here goes:

1) Was the death of Matthew Cable (now Matthew the Raven in *The Dreaming*) ever shown?

2) I just heard a rumor that Todd McFarlane now owns the rights to Miracleman. Please tell me it isn't true.

3) I think Alex Ross is one helluva a nice guy. Do you agree?

4) Has Rob Liefeld lost his mind?

5) How much money do comic book writers make when they're just starting out?

Dan Foster
Sherwood, AR

The beer is grabbed, the TV is off and since I always write the letters column sans pants, I'm pretty darned comfy. Here goes:

1) Yep. Matt Cable bit the big green burrito of death in Swamp Thing #84. Morpheus later transformed him into a raven and brought him to The Dreaming.

2) That is not a question. In fact, No. 2 consists of two statements: one declarative, one imperative. But to answer your unasked question, Todd McFarlane Productions does indeed own the publishing rights to Miracleman, the famed British hero who has been written in the past by industry heavyweights like Watchmen's Alan Moore and

THESE LETTERS ARE GUARANTEED HAND-PICKED FOR FRESHNESS

Six players on the trail of a half million in cash.
There's only one question...Who's playing who?

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Jackie Brown

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This Christmas, Santa's got a brand new bag.

Sandman's Neil Gaiman. Beau Smith of TMP tells us that, "Todd has talked to Neil about Miracleman and other stuff, but nothing is concrete yet. We may publish a new Miracleman title soon; we might never. We'll just have to wait and see."

3) Yep.

4) Yes, he has. But fortunately, he found it again in April of 1997—along with 53 cents in assorted change and his car keys—under the cushions of his couch.

5) I dunno. But if there's one person who should know, it's Witchblade co-writer David Wohl. Y'see, David's been both a writer and an editor for both Marvel and Top Cow. So he's seen it from all angles. Says Wohl: "There's a big difference depending on which publisher you're working for, but starting rates average about $60 a page brought to full script." Therefore, for an average 22-page story, a beginning writer might expect to make $1,300 an issue. And speaking of the long green...

Paul Schindli

Dear Wizard,

Who is the highest-paid comic artist? Who is the highest-paid comic writer?

Brad Moreiko
JudgeSpawn@aol.com

Now this is tough info to find. Comic creator contracts aren't public knowledge like pro sports contracts often are. My best fairly educated guess? Witchblade's Michael Turner (above) is the highest-paid artist and Scott Lobdell of Fantastic Four is the top-paid writer.

Hey Jim,

I am the world's biggest "The Simpsons" fan. I watch the show religiously. However, there is one thing that has stumped me. On the "138th Episode Extravaganza" episode, it was mentioned that both Bleeding Gums Murphy and Dr. Marvin Monroe are dead. I remember the episode where Bleeding Gums died, but I don't know how or when Dr. Monroe kicked the bucket. What caused the demise of Springfield's most obnoxious psychiatrist?

Mike Turner
Indianapolis, IN

Hey, aren't you the probably-highest-paid artist in comics?

Even if you're not, you can remain secure in your "Simpsons" geekdom: The official answer to your question is that there is no official answer. Dr. Monroe is just plain dead, and there has been no explanation as to why. Another reference to his death was made in the "Who Shot Mr. Burns?" episode, where Mr. Burns is seen recovering in the Marvin Monroe Memorial Hospital. Our Hollywood grapevine tells us some of the show's writers just didn't like the character, so they offed him without explanation.

Hi, Wizard!

If DC Comics offered to trade Superman and Batman to Marvel for Spider-Man, do you think Marvel would accept?

Alex Hartzler
TacoBoneGO@aol.com

Shocking but true! Something along these lines damn near happened at the end of the Marvel vs. DC mini-series. Some of the creators involved wanted to leave one Marvel character in the DC Universe and vice-versa. The thought was that the characters would be returned to their rightful spots a year later via the follow-up All Access mini-series. But due to bizarre revenue-sharing difficulties, legal eagles at each company nixed the idea.

Dear All-knowing Jim,

Please answer my questions about Galactus, that really big planet-eating Marvel guy.

1) What world does he come from?

2) Does he have a sister or a father who is the same size as him?

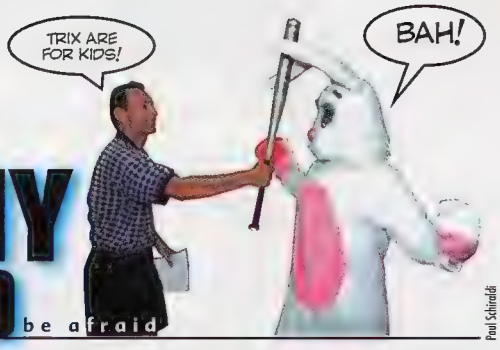
3) Where is there a toilet big enough for him to go to the bathroom?

4) Does he wear that same costume day after day, month after month? Or does he have a clothes closet in that big circle-spaceship thing he lives in?

Paul Wachter
Hatboro, PA

THE BUNNY AWARD

be afraid



Paul Schindli

Jim takes one of his favorite letters of the month and spotlights it here. There's no logic attached to this, nor is there a prize.

Dear Jimbo:

If you were stranded on the proverbial desert island, but could somehow get three monthly comic subscriptions, which ones would you choose? And why? Remember, these subscriptions would be the only things to keep you sane while stranded there.

Me? I'd want *Batman Chronicles*, *JLA* and *Uncanny X-Men*. I really like Batman, and *Chronicles* kicks booty! *JLA*? It needs no explanation. It's one of the best books around. And I've always liked the X-Men, and now that Chris Bachalo is coming aboard as artist, I think that'll be my favorite book of all.

So what would you choose?

Matt Jegerlehner
Dubuque, IA
Gambit6989@aol.com

Hmmm. There are a ton of comics I really like, but narrowing it down to three, I'd have to go with Savage Dragon, Hitman and Sandman Mystery Theatre. The Dragon gives me bizarre, gonzo-crazy stuff every month with a surprising dose of what I can only call "touching real-life drama." Hitman is hilarious, and makes me laugh and wince at the same time with its psycho-funny violence. And SMT is the best love story going. The relationship between Wesley Dodds and Dian Belmont is central to the book, and any superhero-y type stuff is strictly the backdrop.

And yes, gentle reader, we'd now like to see your three "desert island comics." Send in your letters and we'll run 'em here. And remember: Your reasons why are what we really want to see.

Instead of me answering your questions, I'll pass the mike over to Marvel comics historian and editor Tom Brevoort. But I'll provide translations.

1) Says Brevoort: "The planet Taa, in the universe that existed prior to this one."

Translation: Galactus was born a long time ago, prior to this universe even existing.

2) Brevoort: "No, although he has spoken figuratively of Death as his brother and Eternity as his father, because all three were created simultaneously."

Translation: Galactus is an orphan.

3) Brevoort: "All of space is his toilet."

Translation: That's not an asteroid belt!

4) Brevoort: "Different beings perceive Galactus in different ways. To us, he appears as a giant humanoid. As such, he does not possess clothes in a conventional sense."

Translation: Galactus never changes his undies.

Hey, Wizard,

My name is Sean O'Keefe. I'm 5-foot-9, 210 pounds, and a load of trouble when you get me mad. I've been nicknamed "Wolverine" by my football team, because I look a lot like him. I've got questions for you guys.

1) Why in God's good name did Adam Kubert leave *Wolverine*? He was one of the main reasons I read *Wolverine*!

2) Where does Bishop get his hair cut? I can never seem to get a perfect buzzcut.

3) Do the X-Men go through a lot of Dran-O? With the Beast and Wolverine around, they've got to get a bunch of clogged drains.

4) I can't seem to find any Tang anywhere. What should I do?

Sean O'Keefe
Almonte, Ontario, Canada

At 5-foot-9 and 210 pounds, I'm willing to bet you're also a load of trouble around all-you-can-eat brunch buffets. Anyhoo, here are some answers.

Hey! It's Pen Pals

Send your name, address, age, gender and three favorite titles to Pen Pals, c/o the "Magic Words" address on page 16 (put your age on the envelope) or e-mail your REGULAR ADDRESS INFO to MarcEditor@aol.com. If you want your Internet address listed instead, the only way to do this is to post your info in the Pen Pals board on America Online's "Wizard World" forum (keyword: Wizard; look under "Wizard Message Boards").

PEN PALS

David Bankson
Age: 14 Sex: Male
479 Company Farm Road
Baskin, LA 71219-9569
Likes: *Witchblade, The Darkness,* most Marvel titles

David Booth-Willmann
Age: 14 Sex: Male
6 Pleasant St.
Goffstown, NH 03045
Likes: *Gen^{13}, Uncanny X-Men, Deadpool*

Anjali Muzquiz
Age: 13 Sex: Female
4969 Mills St.
La Mesa, CA 91941
Likes: most anime and manga, Sailor Moon

Goran Karlsson
Age: 22 Sex: Male
Ljusviksvagen 21,
86234 Kvissleby, Sweden
Likes: *Superman, Avengers, X-Factor*

Marko Baggio
Age: 17 Sex: Male
1332 61st St.
Lubbock, TX 79412
Likes: *Ronin Warriors, Sailor Moon, Dragon Ball Z*

Rell A. Edwards
Age: 17 Sex: Male
3905 North Ave.
Richmond, VA 23222
Likes: *Gen^{13}, Uncanny X-Men, Deadpool*

Andrea Riley
Age: 17 Sex: Female
N6866 Lake Dr.
Whitewater, WI 53190
Likes: X-titles (especially *Wolverine* and *Deadpool*, anime)

1) Sez Adam, who has moved on to penciling Incredible Hulk, *"I really like the color green! Plus, I had been on* Wolverine *for three years and I was ready for something else."*

2) According to X-Men Assistant Editor Jason Liebig, "Bishop gets his hair cut at the Boulevard Barber Shop in the X-Men's home-base town of Salem Center, New York."

3) Liebig says, "The X-Men used to use Shi'ar hair-removal technology to keep their pipes clean. Now that that's no longer in the X-Mansion, they're going through a can of Dran-O a week. The industrial-strength stuff."

4) Drop back 10 and punt.

Dear Wiz-Boys,

I recently bought the *JLA Secret Files* book. Toward the end of the book, there are two-page spreads of all the JLA members and all the villains the JLA has faced. But Despero appears on each spread. What's the deal?

Sergio Mendez
Idaho Falls, ID

The deal is this: Despero was one of the Justice League's nastiest and deadliest foes. Hence, he's on the villains spread. But using his telepathic powers, the Martian Manhunter once wiped Despero's brain clean, leaving just his powerful body behind. That body was later possessed by the consciousness of a robot named L-Ron. The L-Ron-mind-in-Despero-body was a member of the Justice League Task Force. Hence, he's on the members spread.

Dear Wizard,

1) I think Bastion is a Prime Sentinel. All the evidence points to him being a Sentinel. He's used a forcefield, he's got red eyes, and he's exhibited other android stuff.

2) Why did Mr. and Mrs. Howell take so much luggage for a "three-hour tour" on "Gilligan's Island"?

Matt Wilcher
Shawsville, VA

1) Maybe, maybe not. My best guess is that all will be revealed in two Bastion-themed one-shots due from Marvel in early '98. Look for them and look for your answers.

2) Because they are The Man. They are so obsessed with and so tied to their filthy wealth that they cannot bear to separate themselves from their riches. They brought their entire wardrobe for a three-hour tour and—Get this!—$2 million in cash? For what? To get stranded on some island? The crew shoulda killed the Howells and floated back to the mainland on their bloated corpses! Power to the people! Eat the rich!

Jim,

1) Do you suffer from random delusions of grandeur?

2) What do you think of Vincent, Quantum and Woody's goat? Be honest!

3) Got a favorite Sailor Scout?

Allison Leary
St. Johns, MI

1) Nothing random about it. I suffer from delusions of grandeur at regularly scheduled 45-minute intervals.

2) Okay, I'll be honest! I wouldn't want it living with me, but I think it's pretty damn funny.

3) Does Popeye count?

Photo by J. Sodi © 1996 World Champion Wrestling, Inc. All rights reserved.

Hey, Wizardites:

What does Crow creator James O'Barr think of the WCW wrestler Sting ripping off the look of the Crow?

Scott Loftis
Sod, WV

There's really a Sod, West Virginia? An entire city named after a tough surface layer of earth containing grass and roots? No kidding?

Perhaps surprisingly, O'Barr isn't bothered by Sting's look. "It's not like I'm going to bring a lawsuit or anything," he says. "I guess it's just imitation, which is the sincerest form of flattery."

Dear Jim,

What is mulch?

George S. Blanton Jr.
Roseville, MI

"Mulch" is a combination of chopped-up leaves and stems spread around the bases of garden plants to prevent the roots from freezing in cold weather. According to Jim Martindale, developer of the all-purpose tool the Garden Weasel, mulch is "beneficial." For more horticultural information, see the guy from Sod, W.Va.

Dear Wizard staff,

When looking through the 10-cent bin at the local comic store recently, I came across a copy of *Howard the Duck* #19, which I bought. While reading it, I came across the letters page, which contained a letter by someone named Kurt Busiek. Is this the same Kurt Busiek of *Marvels* and *Astro City* fame?

Sam Froehlich
Dayton, OH

It's him. Busiek says that in addition to HTD *#19, he's "had about a 100 letters printed in Marvel comics." Busiek and many other well-known creators populate the letters columns of 1970s-vintage Marvels. Ya may wanna crack open a back issue or two and look for 'em.*

And speaking of letterhacks...

Dear Magic Words,

In the classic Doobie Brothers song "What a Fool Believes," Michael McDonald sings the line "He came from somewhere back in her largo." Now, what the heck is a largo?

And who the heck is Olav Beemer? And where does he find the time to write all those letters? And is he a Netherlander or a Netherlandian? All I know is that this waffle boy (Yeah, I know Belgium is actually famous for waffles, but I have no idea what the Netherlands are famous for.) is taking valuable letter page space from red-blooded Americans! I think because of this, we oughta bomb Ziest [Beemer's home town] right off the map in a fit of nationalist zeal! What do you think?

Mick Swinarski
Omaha, NE

It ain't "largo." The line is "He came from

PENPALS

Paul Byron Woods II
Age: 18 Sex: Male
P.O. Box 37
Beaumont, MS 39423
Likes: *Spawn, Scud, Vampirella*

Melissa Blaedow
Age: 16 Sex: Female
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Likes: X-titles, *The Darkness*, anime

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Likes: *Spawn*, X-titles, *Azrael*

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Saen (yes, Saen) **McNal, 21/m**
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Scud, Quantum and Woody, Mage

Robert Brigham, 15/m
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Sandman, Superman, any anime

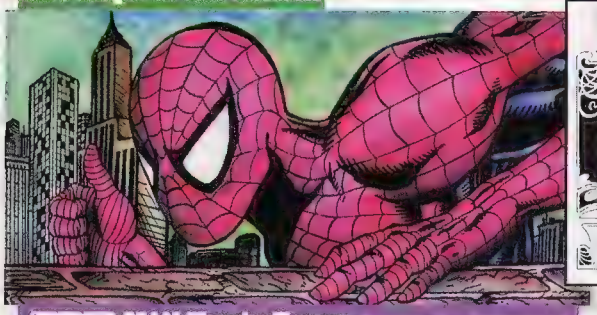
Brandon Cleveland, 14/m
Violator98@aol.com
Spawn, X-titles, *Deadpool*

IN YOUR STORES THE WEEK OF MARCH 16-20
GUARANTEED!

LETTER ART

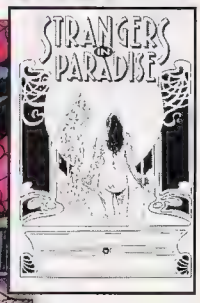
Fans who have their letter art printed this month will each receive a set of the Gold Logo editions of *Strangers in Paradise* (original series) #1-#3 autographed by Terry Moore, plus a copy of this issue of *Wizard* signed by the entire *Wizard* creative staff! The creator of the best envelope swings away with a signed *Strangers in Paradise* sketch by Moore, plus the signed comics and signed *Wizard* issue! (Thanks a ton for all the stuff, Terry!) Artists: Please include a clearly printed return address and **a list of characters depicted** on the **back** of your envelope. Good luck!

envelope of the month



SPIDER-MAN Hengky Tanoyo Surabaya, Indonesia

THE PRIZE



HUMAN TORCH Gilbert C. de Vera Manila, Philippines

FLAMING CARROT Troy Carlson Columbus, OH

WOLVERINE Efrain Ramos Houston, TX

we're in the home stretch...

somewhere back in her long-ago," meaning that the "he" in question is returning from "her" past.

Olav Beemer is perhaps the most prolific comic letter-writer around. His merry missives grace the pages of multiple comic letters columns every month, with a heavy concentration in DC's Vertigo titles. As to how many letters a month he writes and where he finds the time, I don't know. I tried to get in touch with him but he couldn't be reached. Probably busy writing a letter.

And just so ya know, people from the Netherlands are "Dutch." And in a rare instance of self-restraint from random violence, I vote "no" on bombing Ziest, The Netherlands. From what I hear, it's a pretty nice place—full of tulips and loose women.

Dear Wizard,

I have an almost-complete set of *Operation: Dessert Storm* trading cards. Are these worth anything?

Dustin Fair
Dublin, PA

Oh, yeah, they're worth a whole lot. F'r example, the cheesecake card is worth about $2.95 a slice. The ice cream card, available in 31 flavors, goes for about 95 cents a scoop. And that crème brûlée card? Real expensive!

But seriously, folks—in a fit of nationalist zeal in 1991, a boatload of exploitative trading card companies cranked out a bevy of Operation: Desert Storm *cards to capitalize on the pain and destruction of the Gulf War. When the war ended, the novelty wore off. Today, they're worth about as much as Iraqi sand. Which is to say, about nothing.*

Speaking of nothing, that's about what I've got left for space. Until next month, I remain...

—Jim McLauchlin

Much like the Earth, two-thirds of Jim McLauchlin is covered with water. Much like the Earth, the other one-third is very deep, dark, and mysterious.

Send letters to:
Magic Words
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920
or e-mail us at WizWords@aol.com

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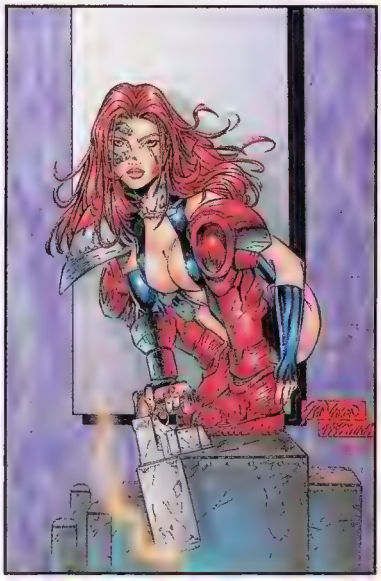

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'Identity Crisis'

Spider-Man gets four new identities and a total revamp!

It happened to Superman once. Now it's happening to Peter Parker. Look for **Spider-Man** to get not one—but four—new looks in March.

Radical changes are planned for Spider-Man over the next six months, including an identity change in March and April, Peter Parker splitting up with wife **Mary Jane** in May, and an eventual reboot of the entire Spider-Man line in June.

It all starts with a story reminiscent of DC's "Reign of the Supermen" tale from 1993 where four super-powered individuals claimed to be Superman, following Superman's apparent death. But this time, Marvel Comics gives Spider-Man himself four brand-new superhero identities that he uses to protect himself after Spidey is hunted for a murder he didn't commit. This storyline, "Identity Crisis," officially begins in March's ***Sensational Spider-Man* #27** when longtime Spidey nemesis **Norman Osborn** places a $1 million bounty on Spider-Man's head.

"Every bounty hunter from the Punisher to the Shocker is hunting him," said *Sensational Spider-Man* writer **Todd Dezago**. "It gets to the point where being Spider-Man is becoming ineffective, and he's endangering the people he's trying to save because all these bounty hunters are shooting at him while he's trying to help people."

Parker concludes that to continue the tradition of his motto, "With great power, comes great responsibility," he must take on four new identities to mask his presence in New York City. "Each new identity reflects a part of Peter Parker," said Spider-Man Group Editor **Ralph Macchio**. "Each title will follow the adventures of one new identity and the role that new identity has in the superhero community or underworld."

To avoid being recognized as Spider-Man re-clothed, Parker will make sure his new identities contain all-new weapons, powers and attitudes. Thus, Parker won't use his web-shooters or even his ability to stick to walls. His new identities, all debuting in March's books, are:

RICOCHET

Spider-Man adopts the persona of a new hero named Ricochet in ***Amazing Spider-Man* #434**. Designed by *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* penciler Mark Buckingham, the Ricochet costume was inspired by the Amalgam character Spider-Boy. "I asked Mark to design a fun character to reflect the liveliness of this new identity," said Macchio. "Ricochet is the closest of the new four to the free-wheeling Spidey we know."

Similar to TV's Xena, Ricochet will have discs on his arm that he'll toss at villains. In addition, Ricochet will maintain the wall-crawler's bubbly attitude. "To prevent people from knowing he's Spider-Man, Ricochet will probably take the wise-cracking a step higher, if that's possible," said Macchio. "He'll also play up his agility."

MATTE BLACK

Penciler **John Romita Jr.** has created a shadowy new costume for Spidey which debuts in ***Peter Parker: Spider-Man* #91**. Calling himself Matte Black, Spider-Man will take on the role of an underworld character. "Matte Black will be used to infiltrate the New York underworld," said Macchio. "Matte Black will come into town and pose as a bounty hunter looking for Spider-Man

Early designs of Prodigy (right) and Ricochet.

Hornet (top) and Matte Black.

himself. So Spider-Man has a little fun with this and almost parodies the situation."

Matte Black will rely heavily on his spider-sense to slip into the darkness. "He will blend with the shadows," said Macchio. "He'll have a ninja quality of stealth. He may even use this identity and position in the underworld to cozy up to Norman Osborn."

THE HORNET

Peter Parker will transform into a flying hero, the Hornet, in *Sensational Spider-Man* #27. In a desperate attempt to duck out of the spotlight, Spider-Man will approach Hobie Brown (a.k.a. the Prowler), for help in creating a new identity. "The Hornet becomes the 'Iron Man' of these new identities," said Macchio. "It plays up Peter Parker's science knowledge and background."

The Hornet will have a variety of technological gadgets and weapons to substitute for his missing webbing. With this identity, he'll also have the ability to fly, a first for Spider-Man (if you don't count the brief time he possessed the power of Captain Universe). "But if you've never flown before, you won't be good at it," said Macchio. "That in itself is a story."

PRODIGY

The new identity of Prodigy premieres in ***Spectacular Spider-Man* #257**. Marvel's new Senior Art Director **Michael Golden** (see story on page 24) has designed this very superheroic character. "He'll represent the ultimate do-gooder," said Macchio. "He has an almost Superman kind of quality and look to him."

Peter Parker will use the Prodigy identity to gain mass appeal and win over the public's hearts. "Prodigy is the aspect of Spider-Man who thinks and feels it's his responsibility to make sure no one suffers the way Aunt May suffered when Uncle Ben was shot," said Macchio. "He's going to be saving everybody he sees in trouble, including rescuing cats from trees."

MARRIAGE PROBLEMS?

The ultimate ramifications of "Identity Crisis" are still being discussed among the Spider-creators. However, rumors indicate that the strain built up in this story will cause Peter Parker and Mary Jane to split. "We'll have the disappearance of Mary Jane in May," said Macchio. "We're not sure of the end result yet. Whether they're getting divorced or just separated is still in the talking stages."

REBOOT

And finally, come June, after Spider-Man has been broken down, he'll be built back up. Marvel will pare down the Spider-titles from four regular ongoing monthlies to two. Creators have been put on notice that come June's reboot, they may very well still be working on the arachnid or they may be looking for assignments elsewhere.

Right now, Marvel is planning to keep *Amazing Spider-Man* and *Peter Parker: Spider-Man* as the two main Spidey titles in current continuity, with exact creative teams to be determined. *Spectacular Spider-Man* is tentatively slated to become a title where rotating creative teams can tell short story arcs set in Spider-Man's past, similar to DC Comics' *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight*. And *Sensational Spider-Man*'s fate? Currently undecided. It's possible that it may become an avenue to tell Mary Jane stories, or even a way to maintain the four new identities spawned from "Identity Crisis" in a monthly series.

Why these massive, sweeping changes? Macchio thinks Spidey has been neglected. "With the 'Heroes Return' storyline going on, Spider-Man was getting lost in the shuffle," he said. "We want to bring Spider-Man back into the spotlight." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

Children of Chernobyl tour local comic con. "I think we should kill it," commented a fan in regards to a mutated attendee before getting woozy and dying from low-level radiation poisoning.

Man faces off with evil pipe on deserted rooftop. "It's got my gum!" screamed Prozac-deprived fanboy before knocking himself unconscious in a failed attempt to retrieve his Hubba-Bubba.

"Too Close for Comfort"'s Cosmic Cow revamped for the '90s. "I'm here to kick ass and chew cud. . . and I'm all outta cud," growled grittier, beefier bovine before being slaughtered and served with eggs.

ahead

HULK: NEW BOOK AND DIRECTION

X-MEN/ALPHA FLIGHT X-OVER!

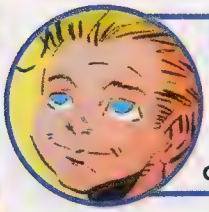
MILLER'S NEXT PROJECT!

Who Is Joseph?

Head...hurt!

Boy, for an issue that was supposed to *answer* questions, *Uncanny X-Men* #350 sure left us with a whole lot more. Among them: Why did Sinister choose Gambit to gather the Marauders in the first place? Why did Magneto *really* dress as Erik the Red? Why was the normally too-cool Gambit so freakin' whiny? And, the whopper of 'em all...if Joseph isn't Magneto, WHO is Joseph?

Wizard's got its list of suspects. And here they are along with the likelihood of our choices. ■ *The* Wizard *Staff*

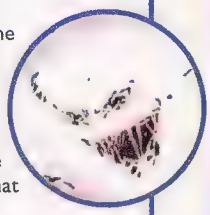


Charles Lehnsherr

Magneto's son from the "Age of Apocalypse" reality could've crossed over, been aged by the Dark Beast and planted inside the X-Men as an amnesiac. How else would he have magnetic powers and look just like Maggie?

ODDS: 2-1

Proteus



Though it's a stretch, when Magneto was de-aged in the care of Moira MacTaggart, she could've cloned him, creating the perfect home for her reality-altering mutant son Proteus (who could've feigned death in *Uncanny X-Men* #128 and is now an amnesiac). Genetic tinkering could've allowed for Proteus to not deteriorate the cloned body, and since his weakness is metal, what better power to have than magnetism?

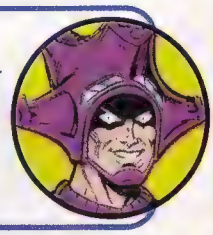
ODDS: 4-1

Morph

Another "Age of Apocalypse" crossover victim, Morph could've lost his memory in the jump and subconsciously triggered his shape-shifting powers to look like his reality's greatest hero, Magneto. How'd he get magnetic powers? At that point, Sinister or the Dark Beast could've easily messed with his genetics to give 'em to him.

ODDS: 5-1

Changeling



Posing as Prof. X waaaaay back in continuity, this shape-changer could've faked his death and decided that being a villain's a much better gig. Sinister coulda got a hold of him and powered him up as an amnesiac Magneto planted inside the X-Men.

ODDS: 6-1

Magneto

Maybe he really *is* Magneto, and that Erik the Red guy in *Uncanny X-Men* #350 was some other schmoe (maybe one of the other guys on this list). A lame possibility, but a possibility nonetheless.

ODDS: 7-1

Dr. Polaris

Um, DC Comics' master of magnetism could've been thrown into the Marvel reality through some *Access* mini-series, couldn't he?

ODDS: 80,000-1

BUZZ BOX

The inside scoop on the comic industry

• **The Next Generation of Marvel!** Word on the drum is that a line of comics with the working title "Generation M" is in the works at Marvel. Insiders tell us this line debuts in late 1998 with three titles that represent the "next generation" of Marvel heroes.

• **X-Universe Upheaval!** Massive, sweeping changes are in the wind for Marvel's X-Men universe this summer. Marvel is trying to gear up to biweekly *X-Men* and *Uncanny X-Men* titles for summer, as well as the debut of a brand-new X-title by the fall.

• **Sneak Peek at the Line-Up Card!** The hottest topic in comics—the new JLA line-up—will soon be revealed! While DC Comics is keeping exact team composition a well-guarded secret, our double-agents have confirmed two dark horse characters who *will* make the cut: Look for both Steel and Plastic Man to join the League in *JLA* #16.

• **Stan Lee Writes Superman?** Maybe! The man who founded the Marvel Universe may take a swing at writing the Man of Steel in a rumored Superman/Hulk crossover this summer.

• **The Plague is Coming!** Ya hadda guess it? Marvel Comics is deep, deep, deep in negotiations with Alex Ross to bring his "Earth X" concept (an exclusive giveaway in *Wizard* #77) into reality as a late 1998 mini-series. Rumored to be connected with the project? Artist John Paul Leon (*Challengers of the Unknown*).

• **Darkness Grows!** Word is that Top Cow big kahuna Marc Silvestri will be taking some time off from drawing *The Darkness* to devote time to the Cow's movie and TV projects. Rumored to be his replacement? Joe Benitez, formerly of *Weapon Zero*.

• **Jim Lee is Magic!** Wizards of the Coast, publishers of the overly successful *Magic: The Gathering* card game, is in negotiations with WildStorm's Jim Lee to produce a new card game/comic combo currently in development under the title "C-23."

• **Brando Moves!** Creator Brandon Peterson and Top Cow couldn't come to agreement as to the financials involved in the Cow's continued publication of Peterson's *Arcanum*. So Peterson is off to Marvel, where we hear he'll pencil an unspecified mini-series before moving on to monthly work.

OOPS!

In *Wizard* #76's "Strip Tease" starring Quantum and Woody, Atomic Paintbrush was inadvertently credited as colorist of the piece. It was in fact Twilight Graphics who colored it. We apologize to both parties.

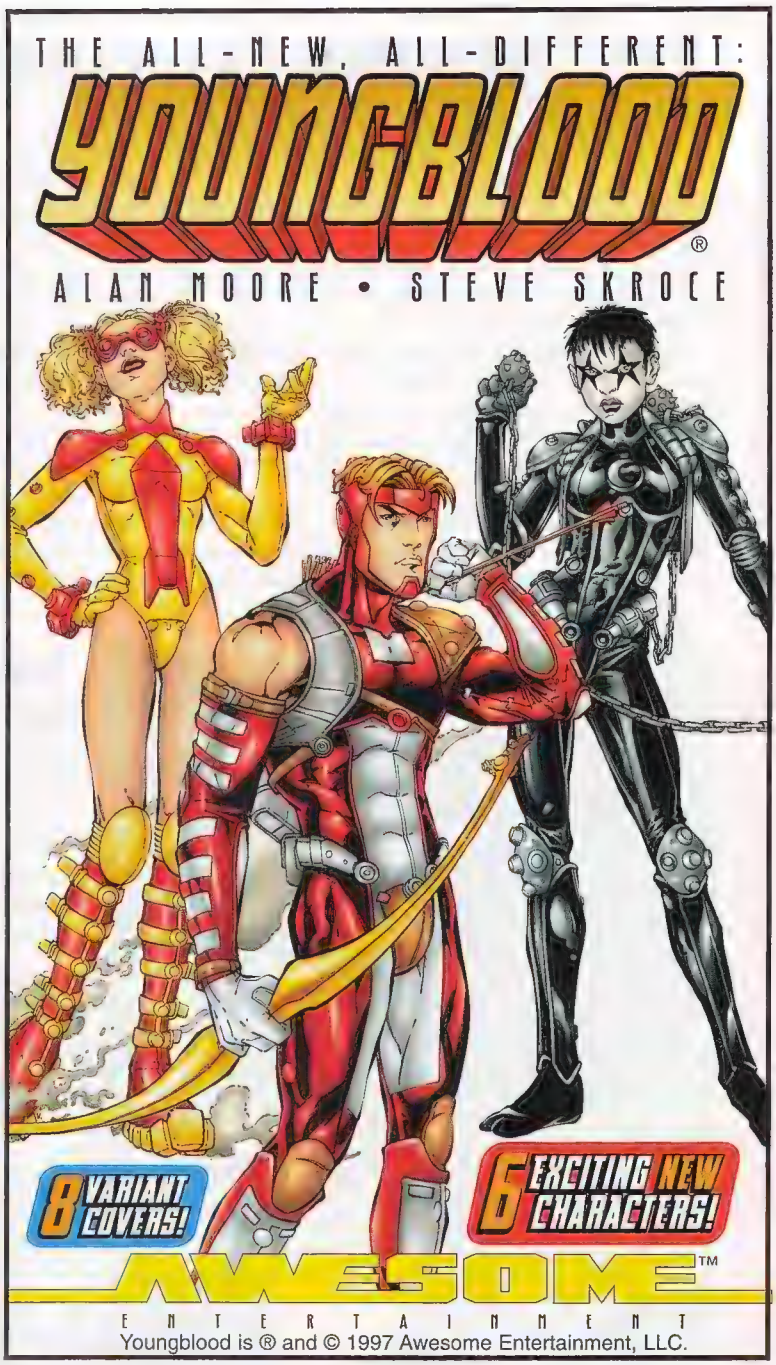
Savage Dragon Frowns on Help from Superman

Crossover mania continues, as **Erik Larsen**'s Savage Dragon and DC Comics' Superman turn up in two team-up one-shot specials in late 1998: *Savage Dragon/Superman* from Image Comics, followed by *Superman/Savage Dragon* from DC. First up, in *Savage Dragon/Superman*, Supes heads to the Dragon's Chicago stomping grounds when **Lex Luthor**'s henchmen infiltrate Chicago's Vicious Circle crime gang. This doesn't sit too well with the Chicago government, which calls in Metropolis' first citizen. But the Dragon's not too happy to be helped.

"Dragon's basically a city cop who's been able to handle everything his town's thrown at him so far," Larsen said. "And now when Luthor's goons come in, the city calls in Superman, essentially a bigger, brighter, better cop. Their relationship is going to be a bit strained."

Savage Dragon/Superman will be written and penciled by Larsen, with inks by **Terry Austin**. No word yet on who will be handling the creative chores for DC's *Superman/Savage Dragon*. Look for Larsen's side of the team-up in late summer, with DC's half shortly thereafter. ■ *Matthew Brady*

Savage Dragon takes on Supes this summer.



Marvel/Event Consider 'Heroes Reborn'-Type Deal

Another "Heroes Reborn"-style deal is in the works for some Marvel Comics characters. If it goes through, Marvel is making sure that this time, things stay close to home. In fact, they're making sure things stay in their offices.

Event Comics founders **Jimmy Palmiotti** and **Joe Quesada** have suspended publication of all Event titles—including *Ash, Crimson Plague* and *Painkiller Jane*—for six months. Many see this as an overture to Palmiotti and Quesada "overseeing" production of a group of Marvel titles, similar to the 1996 deal Marvel struck with Jim Lee and Rob Liefeld in "Heroes Reborn." Key differences? Stories would take place within the Marvel Universe—not in a separate universe as happened with "Reborn"—and Palmiotti and Quesada would work on site at Marvel's offices.

"We've been talking extensively with [Marvel President] Joe Calamari," Quesada said, "and we've sent a proposal which their legal department is going through."

If finalized, ***Daredevil*** will become the key title in the Palmiotti/Quesada stable. Popular writer Joe Kelly (*X-Men*) is leaving *Daredevil* after issue #375, citing a heavy workload. If all goes well, Quesada would like screenwriter **Kevin Smith** ("Chasing Amy") to write the title, with Quesada himself penciling.

Also part of the proposed deal is a new *Black Panther* title which Quesada wants to make "very hip, very urban contemporary," and several other revivals of unspecified Marvel characters.

And the future of Event Comics? "We're not out of business, we're not bankrupt," said Quesada. "It's just a restructuring and consolidating of the company. We may have Event back in *less* than six months." Many have speculated that if this deal goes through, Event may return as a creator-owned imprint of Marvel Comics. "Coincidence or not? I don't know," Quesada said. "Speculate as you will." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

New Darkness Title Lights Up March

Because most comic fans don't have enough Darkness in their lives, Top Cow debuts ***Tales of the Darkness*** in March 1998. To kick off the series with a bang, **Whilce Portacio** (*WetWorks*) pencils the first story arc.

Spinning off from the successful *Darkness* title, *Tales* begins as a quarterly book before ultimately going bimonthly in fall '98. Where will the new book fit into continuity, most specifically with the current bearer of the Darkness, Jackie Estacado? According to editor **David Wohl**, it may not. "The Darkness is a weapon, it's a power," he said. "This book will focus on other people who have it, so it's really not connected to continuity. We'll see the Darkness lineage, but each story doesn't have to relate to the current book." Which is not to say *Tales* is unimportant to the overall Darkness story. In fact, *Tales* #4 will interconnect the two titles, albeit briefly.

Tales will likely feature rotating creators as it focuses on different characters. For the first issue, Brian Haberlin (*Spawn* colorist) will be working with Malachy Coney (*The Darkness*) on the writing duties, while Portacio handles the art. Although nothing has been set in stone yet, it's likely that Coney may wind up as the series' regular writer.

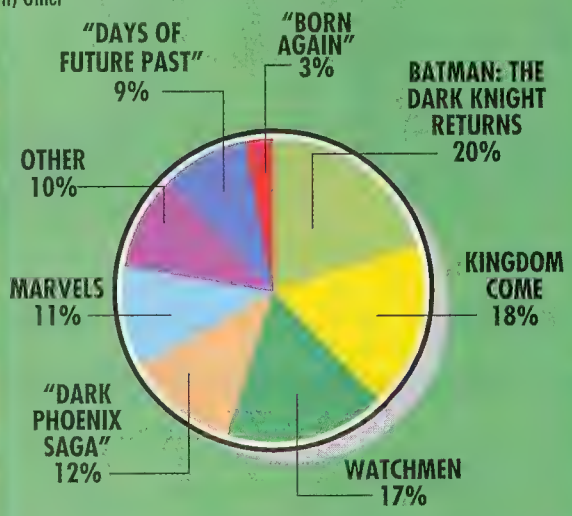
Top Cow has been waiting anxiously for the right time to launch its new title. "We've been planning it for months," said Wohl. "We wanted to see if people liked *Darkness* before we started a spin-off book. And we definitely didn't want to make people think they had to pick it up, which is why it's independent of the regular book. If people don't want to pick it up, they don't have to. *The Darkness* and *Tales of the Darkness* are a nice matched set, but they can stand alone, too." ■ *Scott Brick*

Who will possess the Darkness besides Jackie Estacado?

READER POLL

WHAT IS THE GREATEST COMIC BOOK STORY EVER TOLD?

a) *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*
b) "Born Again" (*Daredevil* #227-#233)
c) *Kingdom Come*
d) *Marvels*
e) *Watchmen*
f) "Dark Phoenix Saga" (*Uncanny X-Men* #129-#137)
g) "Days of Future Past" (*Uncanny X-Men* #141-#142)
h) Other



Through our forum on America Online (Keyword: Wizard), *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* edged out hot competition to become our readers' choice as the greatest story of all-time. "*Dark Knight* redefines the modern legend that is Batman," said one respondent. "It surprises and keeps you on the edge of your seat."

Kingdom Come and *Watchmen* came close, but no cigar. "*Kingdom Come* and *Marvels* still need to age to become the greatest story. They have to stand the test of time," said another fan. "And *Watchmen*, while amazing, doesn't have that one character you've loved since childhood." ■ *Victor Tayback*

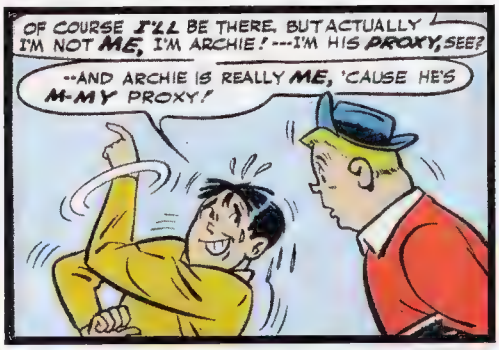
Longtime 'Archie' Artist Passes Away

Artist Samm Schwartz, a legend at Archie Comics, passed away on November 13, 1997 at age 77, after battling cancer.

Schwartz's work appeared in the famous *Archie Comics* #1, published in 1942, and the artist continued to draw for the company until his death.

"His ability to tell stories visually was unparalleled at Archie," said longtime Archie Managing Editor Victor Gorelick. "He knew how to get the most out of every script." ■ *Paul Castiglia*

Schwartz's writing appeared in *Archie Comics* #1.



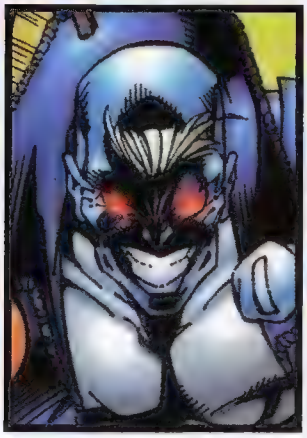
we LOOKED it up

khon•shu (KON shoo), proper noun. ancient Egyptian times-present **1** Egyptian god of the moon and god of vengeance **2** deity who Marc Spector credits with his revival from death's door and transformation into the costumed crimefighter Moon Knight **3** what guys in prison wear on their feet

Is New X-Man Maggott Really a Murderer?

Maggott, the newest X-Man, has a secret. But could the secret be that he's really a murderer?

The double-sized ***X-Men* #75** will answer that question when it hits comic stands in March. Written by new X-scribe **Joe Kelly** and penciled by regular *X-Men* artist **Carlos Pacheco**, *X-Men #75* will feature the newest of the X-Members—Maggott, Marrow, Dr. Cecilia Reyes and Cannonball—in their first real adventure as a team. "I want to bring focus to the younger crew," said Kelly, "and this story is a chance to do that. By watching the new guys interact, we'll set the stage for things to come as far as team dynamics."



Is Maggott a murderer?

The story itself will examine a series of murders taking place in Salem Center, home of the X-Men. When tell-tale slime trails are left at the murder scenes, Maggott becomes the prime suspect. Making matters worse, Maggott has been losing track of his two pet slime-leaving, super-powered slugs, Eeny and Meeny. Are they responsible for the murders? "All clues definitely point at, if not Maggott, then definitely Eeny and Meeny," said Kelly. "And Maggott is acting a little sinister and underhanded. I wouldn't rule him out."

Also factoring into *X-Men #75*, a new variation of an old X-foe will reportedly rear his/her/its head. "All I'll say is this foe is tied into the recent departure of all the technology in the X-Mansion. If the X-Men had their technology, they may have been alerted to the foe's presence."

But that's just a subplot to the larger murder mystery. "The old foe will not overshadow the Salem Center murders," said Kelly, who promises a swift conclusion. "That mystery will get resolved in this issue." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

Miller Goes Ancient for New Title

Who says comics can't be historically accurate and tell a damn good story at the same time? Surely not **Frank Miller**.

A new **Dark Horse Comics** project entitled *300*, the story of the 300 Spartans who held back King Xerxes' Persian army at Thermopylae in 480 B.C., will hit shelves in late spring. And while this may sound like a boring history lesson, nothing is ever boring when done by talented and influential *Sin City* creator Frank Miller.

"We're targeting this as five issues," editor Diana Schutz said. "But Frank's at the end of issue two and the battle hasn't even started, so it may run over our initial plan."

For Miller, who's researched the project for several years, and even actually visited the battlefield in Greece, the project is the culmination of a dream he's had since he was seven years old.

"It's a project that he's wanted to do for a long, long time," Schutz said. "He decided that now was the right time to do it." Miller's wife, **Lynn Varley**, will provide colors for *300*. ■ *Matthew Brady*

Hulk Transforms with New Title, Big Changes

Hulk fans should brace themselves for big changes in May 1998.

First, the Green Goliath is going to be starring in a new monthly book, tentatively titled ***Hulk: Shades of Green***. According to editor Jaye Gardner, the title will feature rotating creative teams on short story arcs set in the Hulk's past.

"Everyone in the general public knows a Hulk that's big, green and angry," said Gardner. "This will be a playback on the old Marvel mythology with an original feel that should bring in new readers." No creative team is set for the book's launch, but Gardner says that creators such as writers **Grant Morrison** (*JLA*) and **Christopher Priest** (*Quantum and Woody*), and artist **Tom Grummett** (*Superboy*) are interested.

And even bigger news is brewing in the pages of the ongoing *Incredible Hulk*, where 12-year *Hulk* writer **Peter David** is getting ready to whack continuity upside the head. Not surprisingly, the elusive David isn't handing out many specifics. "I'm endeavoring to completely hose the readers by making everyone believe I'm taking the series in one direction and then yanking the rug out from under them."

Specifically, the rug gets yanked in issue #466, due out in May. David says the storyline in question, featuring some of the Hulk's most cunning adversaries including the Maestro and the Abomination getting very involved in Greenskin's personal life, culminates there and will transform the Hulk forever. "What we're going to see is the Hulk reinventing himself by necessity. He'll have his world shaken up in a way that it's never been before." ■ *Scott A. Aubrey*

Big shocks and a new title hit the Hulk in May.

Claremont, Waid and Golden Sign on at Marvel

What's old is new again at Marvel Comics. The company has just signed up three high-profile veteran creators in looking to the future.

Chris Claremont, the writer who brought the X-Men into prominence 20 years ago, is Marvel's new editorial director. Highly influential artist **Michael Golden** (*Micronauts*) has been tabbed as Marvel's senior art director, and acclaimed writer **Mark Waid** (*Captain America*) will swing by the office once weekly as Marvel's new consulting editor. All three work under current Marvel Editor-in-Chief Bob Harras.

Paul Schiraldi

Mark Waid

Claremont says his official function is to help Marvel, "tell stories more efficiently and dramatically." Unofficially, he's there to "lend institutional memory to the group. [Marvel founder] **Stan Lee** is approaching his 75th birthday and there's a whole generation of writers and editors to whom Stan is a legend, but to whom Stan was never the guy who edited copy. Stan was here when I started years ago. I want to provide continuity between then and now."

Albert Ortega

Chris Claremont

Golden will be supervising Marvel's covers and working on character designs. He brings both art design and comic backgrounds to the task and says that while his job starts out "purely administrative, there will probably soon be a time where I'm doing some art on books."

Former editor Waid said his freelance consulting job will deal with "brainstorming ideas and direction, and adding my experience from both sides of the desk." Waid also said he will concentrate heavily on being a "mighty Marvel cheerleader and reminding guys that what we do is fun."

But both Claremont and Waid, well-known as comic writers, said that these new jobs won't stop them from telling tales across the comic world. "That was a point in the negotiations," said Claremont, who will continue to publish his creator-owned *Sovereign Seven* through DC Comics. "I've got a pre-existing relationship with DC and that will continue." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

Gaiman to Serve as Consultant for New Sandman Projects

Vertigo is getting ready to shine a light into the dusty corners of the Sandman's world. A new series of stand-alone projects, grouped under the umbrella title ***The Sandman Presents***, will offer in-depth looks at periphery characters from the ongoing ***The Dreaming***—all of which will have the stamp of approval from *Sandman* creator **Neil Gaiman**, who serves as creative consultant.

Editor Alisa Kwitney explained that trying to maintain an ongoing continuity in *The Dreaming* was limiting the use of some supporting players. *The Dreaming* will continue as a monthly, and *The Sandman Presents* will open the option of exploring supporting characters by teaming a variety of creators on projects of varying length.

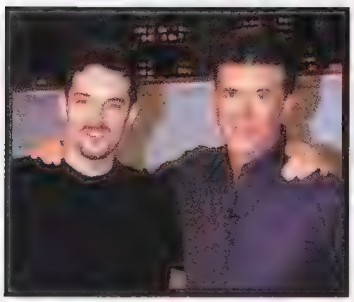
Up first is a three-issue mini-series entitled ***Lucifer Falling***, which takes the title character, last seen tickling the ivories in a piano bar, and provides him a more weighty task. Lucifer will be given an offer from on high to become an agent of Heaven who specializes in doing the dirty work. Kwitney said the story is different in that Lucifer, the Devil himself, shows some heart. "It's about Lucifer finding something that he cares about, and someone that he cares about," she explained.

The project, penned by novelist Elizabeth Hand and painted by Scott Hampton, is due out in August 1998. Next up under *The Sandman Presents* umbrella will be a 56-page one-shot tentatively titled ***Lycanthropunk***. The story, written by Peter Hogan with art by Peter Doherty and D'Israeli, takes place in 1970s England and, in Kwitney's words, is a "punk/wolf shape-shifting/love story."

Kwitney said *The Sandman Presents*, once up and running, is expected to provide four projects a year. ■ *Scott A. Aubrey*

'Uncanny' Artist Stars on 'Pictionary'

Ever get stuck with a "Pictionary" partner who can't draw? That wasn't a problem on the nationally syndicated "Pictionary" TV shows that aired from November 3-7. Partners for contestants on a special "celebrity cartoonists" week included "Garfield" comic strip artist **Jim Davis** and *Uncanny X-Men*'s **Chris Bachalo**.



Courtesy of Marvel

"Marvel just called one day and said 'Pictionary' was looking for an X-Men artist," Bachalo said. "I was on for all five days, but unfortunately, we only won one day. At least it was a wild overtime win."

Bachalo walked away with no money, saying the celebrities' job was to "win as much money as we could for our partners." But he called the experience, "a whole lot of fun. Provided it doesn't screw with my deadlines, I wouldn't mind doing it again." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

X-artist Bachalo (left) with host, Alan Thicke.

Thunderbolts Mix it Up with Avengers

January's *Thunderbolts* #12: Earth's Mightiest Heroes—The Avengers—take on the villains masquerading as heroes in the Avengers' absence—The Thunderbolts! A simple tale of good finally vanquishing evil? Maybe not. "My goal is to make sure that no reader is rooting for the side they *thought* they were going to root for," said *Thunderbolts* writer **Kurt Busiek**.

Thunderbolts #12 finally sees the Avengers (right) take on the T-Bolts!

For those just tuning in, the Thunderbolts are the villainous Masters of Evil, decked out with new identities and led by Baron Zemo. They took on their "heroic" Thunderbolts identities as a way to sneak past Earth's defenses when the Avengers disappeared after 1996's battle with Onslaught, but Zemo exposed their identities to the public in *Thunderbolts* #10. Now, said Busiek, "Zemo's master plan is finally well underway. All he ever wanted all along was access codes to the world's military arsenals." Armed with the codes and a construct called the Biomodem which can control both machinery and human minds, Zemo is poised to take over the world. His problem? Some Thunderbolts have come to like being heroes and have rebelled against Zemo. "What follows is a battle between the 'good' and the 'bad' Thunderbolts," said Busiek, "and during this battle, one Thunderbolt calls on the Fantastic Four and the Avengers."

But it ain't exactly like calling the cavalry. Zemo uses the Biomodem to control the FF and Avengers in order to battle the rogue Thunderbolts. "And that's where things finally start to get interesting," Busiek quipped. "The surviving Thunderbolts are at a crossroads. The underworld won't accept them because they've been playing the hero game. And if they try to be heroes, they won't be accepted by other heroes or the public." Sound like the end of the title? Anything but. Busiek said this first anniversary issue is also the launching pad for the second year.

"The team, quite naturally, will need a new leader in Zemo's absence. And maybe some new members. We've done a good job of providing surprises so far. We've got even more coming in the second year." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

X-Men and Alpha Flight Battle Over Weapon X

A dozen years after their first crossover, X-Men and Alpha Flight will face off *twice* in the same month.

"North and South" is a modern-day clash between the two teams, leaping between the pages of ***Alpha Flight* #10** and ***Uncanny X-Men* #355** in March. Detailing the Canadian Alpha Flight's attempt to "retrieve" Weapon X (**Wolverine**, for you X-challenged folks) from the United States, the same event will be told from two separate perspectives. "It's not so much a crossover as it is a dual perspective on the same event," said **Steven T. Seagle**, scribe of both *Uncanny* and *Flight*. "We'll see it from each side. Alpha Flight feels justified. They've been given a rationale for the retrieval. But to the X-Men, this is a violation of U.S. airspace and kidnapping."

With Seagle writing both books, it seemed only natural for the two teams to meet despite a 12-year hiatus. Seagle originally intended for this encounter to happen further down the line, but was asked by Marvel to move it up to coincide with the *other* X-Flight tale coming out in March.

X-Men/Alpha Flight, a two-issue mini-series by **Ben Raab** (*Excalibur*) and **John Cassaday** (*Desperadoes*), will detail an untold tale of the first time the two teams fought side by side. In it, someone from Charles Xavier's past comes looking for revenge, and winds up using James MacDonald Hudson's (Guardian's) technology to do so.

"We wanted to do a story about our two favorite teams when they *were* our favorite teams," says writer Raab. "The Chris Claremont/John Byrne period on *X-Men* and Byrne's work on *Alpha Flight* were fantastic. We really wanted to capture the feel of that." ■ *Scott Brick*

byte this

WHAT'S UP ON WIZARD WORLD

Cliffhangers Hang Out Online!

You read the "Wizard Q & A" with hot new "Cliffhanger" artists J. Scott Campbell, Joe Madureira and Humberto Ramos in this issue. Now, read the REST of the interview on Wizard World Online! *Wizard* magazine published only 3,000 words of this raucous interview. Wizard World Online has the entire transcript—over 11,000 words of riveting copy! Plus, check out some behind-the-scenes photos that you'll only be able to see in Wizard World Online!

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CHAT HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE SPECIAL EVENTS ROOM

JANUARY 20 (Tuesday)

- **DAVID MACK/KABUKI CHAT**

Wildly popular *Kabuki* artist/writer David Mack appears on AOL for the first time ever! Plus, Wizard World will feature over 25 photographs Mack has used for visual reference on *Kabuki*, including exclusive shots of Mack's girlfriend Connie, the Kabuki model!
Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)

FEBRUARY 9 (Monday)

- **BREAKING IN CHAT**

Learn how to get into the comic biz!
Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST)

FEBRUARY 14 (Saturday)

- **INDY COMICS CHAT**

Chat up all your favorite independent titles here!
Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST)

FEBRUARY 17 (Tuesday)

- **ADAM HUGHES**

Writer/artist Adam Hughes makes a rare Wizard World Online appearance to talk about his many new projects including *WildC.A.T.s/X-Men* (below)!
Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)

Check online for full chat schedules including club-hosted chats.

■ *Buddy Scalera* (WizardTGTC@aol.com)

New Marvel Universe 'Tales' will Fill in History Gaps

Anything goes with the new ***Tales of the Marvel Universe***. As writer **Roger Stern** explains, the new monthly, set for a spring release and slated to feature new artists with each story, is a vehicle to fill in gaps with untold incidents from Marvel's history. "There's virtually no limit," said Stern, gleefully ticking off the possibilities.

The initial story arc is from the past, featuring **Captain America**, the original **Human Torch** and the **Sub-Mariner**—as the World War II Invaders—battling an early version of HYDRA. Beyond that come plans for some pre-Marvel Kirby monsters and WW II tales of **Citizen V**. Stern says this Citizen V won't be the one seen in today's Thunderbolts, but promises some connection between the characters. Stern also says he's been in touch with *Avengers* and *Iron Man* writer **Kurt Busiek** about the possibility of history established in *Tales* affecting those books.

"If there's a catch phrase for this thing," said Stern, "it's that you can't tell where you're going if you don't know where you've been." ■ *Scott A. Aubrey*

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Real-Life Gran'ma Ben Kicks Cow Butt

"It's not my fault! It was *their* idea," said Vijaya Iyer, president of ***Bone*** publisher **Cartoon Books**. "These people live this wonderfully illogical comic book life. They thought it would be fun."

The "they" that Iyer refers to are the organizers of Pogofest, a yearly celebration of "Pogo" comic strip creator Walt Kelly. Every year, Pogofest invites a cartoonist whose work carries on the tradition of Kelly's "Pogo." This year, the Guest of Honor was *Bone* creator **Jeff Smith**. And what better way to honor Smith than to re-enact the "Great Cow Race" from *Bone* #10?

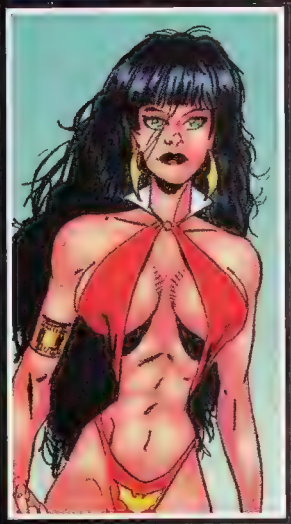
Iyer said the race was supposed to feature a Gran'ma Ben character, a Smiley Bone character and 10 real cows. "But cows are benign creatures only when alone," Iyer warned. "Get 10 together in one place and they get dangerous." For safety's sake, Pogofest went with only one real cow. And the winner? "It was a totally staged event," said Iyer. "Just like in the comic, Gran'ma Ben won the race. And thankfully, no one got trampled." ■ *Jim McLauchlin*

Photos courtesy of Cartoon Books

Top: Only one real bovine was allowed in the race.

Bottom: The winnah and still champeen! Jeff Smith declares Gran'ma Ben the victor.

DOUBLE TAKES



Savage Dragon #41 featured the wedding of Barbaric and Ricochet, and like any good comic book wedding, guests a-plenty showed up. No less than 68 guest-stars appeared, including Hellboy, Madman, Vampirella and...Batman and Robin?

Why are the Dynamic Duo there? Isn't DC Comics notoriously protective of letting its characters wander into other books? "It's not really Batman and Robin," Dragon writer/artist Erik Larsen chuckled. "It's just two guys who look remarkably like them." Larsen got permission to use characters from "everyone who appeared in the indicia of the issue." But eagle-eyed readers might spot some wedding guests who look like Marvel or DC characters. Larsen said he "didn't bother" asking publishers who he felt would just reject the idea out of hand. So those guys who look like Bats and the Boy Wonder? "For all you know, the guy who you think is Batman has hair coming out the top of his mask. And the guy you say looks like Robin has a full beard that's just cropped out," said Larsen. "That's my story and I'm sticking to it."

ABC STUDIOS
The former High Impact Studios hits stands in January with *Raw* #2, showing off **Ricky Carralero**'s (*Double Impact*) newest venture, "Wild Things," in flip-book format.

AC COMICS
Femforce: Darkgods Rampage #1 (of three) ships in January and centers around the Black Shroud's attack....February introduces ***All-Hero Retrocomics Annual*** #1, showcasing six brand-new stories of Golden Age heroes.

ABSTRACT STUDIO
January's ***Strangers in Paradise*** #12, entitled "Bang, You're Dead," features the very last conversation between Darcy Parker and her brother David!

ACCLAIM COMICS
With February's issue #17, Dwayne McDuffie assumes the scripting duties for ***X-O Manowar***.... ***Trinity Angels*** #12 is the final issue of the series.

ALTERNATIVE PRESS
The European-influenced ***Humongous Man*** #3 ships in January. It's by the creative team of Jim Harrison and Dan Stepp.

ARCHIE COMICS
February brings the 75th issue of ***Veronica***, in which Ronnie gets the surprise of her life....February's "lucky" 13th issue of ***Sabrina the Teenage Witch*** features the shocking return of Cousin Ambrose.

AVATAR PRESS
Avatar launches the anthology *Threshold*, its first ongoing monthly title in February. *Threshold* #1 flashes a **Snowman** cover.

AWESOME ENTERTAINMENT
February's relaunch of ***Youngblood*** #1 ships with eight different covers, each featuring a member of the Youngblood team....*KABOOM* #4 in February marks the series' transition from a mini-series to an ongoing. The usual creative team of writer **Jeph Loeb** (*Batman: The Long Halloween*) and penciler Jeff Matsuda (*X-Factor*) preside.

BLONDE AVENGER
Scheduled for March 1998 is ***Full Metal Corset***, and coming in June 1998 is *FMC2: Model Kombat*.

BONGO COMICS
Marge Simpson opens a day-care center in February's ***The Simpsons*** #35.

CHAOS! COMICS
Rattleheads rejoice! February's *Cryptic Writings of Megadeth* #3 adapts **Megadeth**'s classic second album *Peace Sells...But Who's Buying?*

CRUSADE ENTERTAINMENT
Shi: Masquerade #1 continues Crusade's painted Fine Arts Line. The February book is painted by Ray Lago and written by Christopher Golden and Tom Sniegoski....*Shi/Vampirella* artist **Kevin Lau** jumps onto a *Shi: The Series* stint with February's #7.

DARK HORSE COMICS
Sandman Mystery Theatre's Guy Davis handles penciling chores on February's three-issue ***Aliens: Survival*** series....February's ***Mask/Marshal Law*** #1 (of two) pits the two outrageous vehicles of destruction against one another....*Star Wars: Dark Forces—Rebel Agent* is part two of the graphic story-album trilogy featuring Kyle Katarn from **LucasArts**' popular "Dark Forces" video game. It's a $24.95 March release....January's *Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire—Evolution* #1 begins a five-issue sequel to *Shadows of the Empire*, concentrating on **Xizor**'s personal assassin Guri.

DC COMICS
DC and Marvel Comics have announced there will be no **Amalgam Comics** books this April, as there have been in the Aprils of the two previous years. No Amalgam projects at all are currently scheduled.

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS
Gilbert Hernandez returns with *Luba* #1, a new ongoing series based on his lovable character from *Love and Rockets*.

FIREMAN PRESS
January's one-shot *Tales from the Vending Machine* is written and drawn by **Trent Kaniuga** (*Creed*).

HARRIS COMICS
Grant Morrison and Mark Millar guide Vampirella through her second story arc in *Vampirella* with February's *Vampirella: Holy War* #1.

IMAGE COMICS
• TODD MCFARLANE PRODUCTIONS
Remember how McFarlane bought the rights to all of Eclipse's characters? Well, fresh from Eclipse's 1980s ***Airboy*** series comes the monstrous creature known as the Heap. Composed of the worms, maggots, dirt and filth from Spawn Alley, this mysterious character will be making his Image debut in March's ***Spawn*** #72.

• TOP COW COMICS
Sara Pezzini gets clued in about more shocking information on the **Witchblade** in *Witchblade* #21 in February.

• WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS
February sees the start of the ***Gen***^{12} mini-series by Brandon Choi and Michael Ryan, which pieces together the puzzle between the last Team 7 story and the first Gen^{13} story....**James Robinson** (*Starman*) and Larry Stroman are joining forces for next February's *WildC.A.T.s Annual*, which sees Majestic get sick and go insane!...Bryan Hitch and Paul Neary are the new art team on ***StormWatch*** starting with February's issue #4....February's *Gen*^{13} *Bootleg Annual* #1 is a sequel to last year's *Gen*^{13} *Annual*. This one, by the same creative team of Warren Ellis and Steve Dillon, sees the kids in New York City as they confront the cop from Hell.

KITCHEN SINK PRESS
February will see the release of *Zot! Book Two* by **Scott McCloud** (*Understanding Comics*). The 176-page trade paperback compiles issues #11-#15 and #17-#18 of the original Eclipse *Zot!* series.

LONDON NIGHT STUDIOS
Jerry Kennedy and Jerry Beck, the creators of Hall of Heroes' acclaimed ***Sleepwalking*** series, present *Arizona: Wild at Heart* #1, spotlighting LNS' new shapeshifting character. The January book is for mature readers.

MARVEL COMICS
January's *Avengers* #2 ships with a variant cover by painter **Ray Lago**....Also in January, *Uncanny X-Men* #353 drops hints as to **Joseph's** true identity!

MYTHIC COMICS
Mythic Comics' ***Template*** #0 hits in January.

SILLY DADDY
A 32-page flip-book entitled ***Silly Cat*** #1 will ship in January, retailing for only $1.

SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT
Scary Godmother: Bloody Valentine is a humorous holiday one-shot by writer/artist Jill Thompson, featuring vampires, witches and babies. The 48-pager also features pin-ups by **Alex Ross** and Jeff Smith.

SLAVE LABOR GRAPHICS
Jhonen Vasquez (*Johnny, the Homicidal Maniac*) rolls out ***Squee*** #4 in February, featuring Vasquez' weird childhood memories.

TOPPS COMICS
Xena takes on the evil Callisto in *Xena: Warrior Princess: Callisto* #1. The February release is the first of a three-issue mini-series.

VEROTIK
Glenn Danzig's *Satanika* #9 shows the meeting between Satanika and her half-brother in January.

VIZ COMICS
February's ***Pulp*** (vol. 2) #2 is 128 pages and contains five separate adult-oriented manga stories. W

JLA: THE NAIL

THE JLA FACES A HARSH REALITY IN A WORLD WHERE SUPERMAN NEVER EXISTED

"Basically, this is the story of the DC Universe if there was no Superman," says writer/artist Alan Davis of his upcoming project, *JLA: The Nail*. "It's as simple as that."

Set in DC's Elseworlds realm and due this summer, *JLA: The Nail* explores what would've happened if one simple twist of fate twisted the other way. "The reason it's called *The Nail* is twofold," Davis explains in his light English accent. "First, the story concerns a nail, one that gives Jonathan and Martha Kent a flat tire. They don't get to the [Kryptonian] rocket, and they don't find baby Kal-El. That's essentially the only difference between this and the regular DC Universe. Secondly, I chose *The Nail* because Superman is the hub of the DC Universe, the nail that sort of holds everything together, and *JLA: The Nail* demonstrates that."

In the world of *The Nail*, Bruce Wayne became Batman, Wonder Woman came to man's world and Barry Allen became the Flash—all without Superman's inspiration. "Basically, all of the Justice League characters are pretty much the way you'd expect them to be," Davis says. "The real difference is in Superman's foes, who've become a bit more powerful since he wasn't there to stop them. A different dynamic exists among his enemies, and to a degree, they had to slug it out amongst themselves."

Look for those power struggles to be the main focus of the series. "We join the story at the point where things start to change away from the normal DC Universe we know," Davis says. "The Justice League has formed, and they have to try to hold things together without Superman's presence or aid."

But will that tiny nail on a Kansas road prove to be the undoing of the entire DC Universe? Davis ain't tellin'. "I don't want to give too much away, but I can tell you that it's a really fun book," Davis says. "Anyone who loves the DC Universe, anyone who loves the JLA will have a real blast." W

BY MATTHEW BRADY

North Carolina-based writer Matthew Brady wonders what this universe might be like if he didn't exist. More burritos, for one thing.

VITAL STATS

WHO?
Batman, Wonder Woman and the classic JLA

WHAT?
JLA: The Nail, DC Comics' three-issue Elseworlds mini-series by writer/artist Alan Davis due out this summer; each issue will be 48 pages.

WHAT'S THE DEAL?
"What if Superman never existed in the DC Universe?" Can this world's JLA cut it without him?

The classic JLAers headline *The Nail*—an Elseworlds story set in a reality without Superman.

By Scott A. Aubrey

Angst is Robin's middle name, carrying more baggage than your above-average teen.

FLY BOY

No longer just a sidekick, Robin soars as the new Everyteen hero of the '90s

IT'S NOT EASY BEING A BOY WONDER. Just ask Tim Drake, who's Robin the Boy Wonder and having a lot of trouble living up to the title.

His father doesn't understand him. His grades are down. His girlfriend's forbidden to see him. And he's got nobody to talk to about his problems because he would run the risk of not only exposing his secret identity, but that of his partner, Batman. Oh, and there's the general superhero problems—y'know, dodging bullets, saving lives and running for your life.

And you thought *you* had problems?

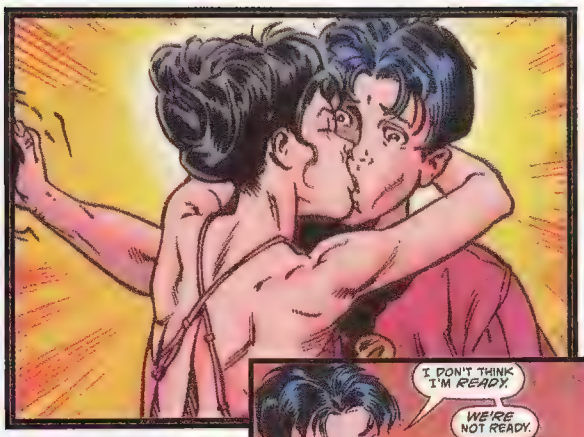
Just as Spider-Man served as the hard-luck hero for his audience when he swung onto the scene in the 1960s, Drake's Robin is doing the same in the '90s. And he's doing it in such a way that it makes you forget he's supposed to be the second half of "Batman and..." More approachable than his two predecessors, Drake provides a real character to whom readers can relate. In essence, he's the Everyman, or at least the Everyteen. Sure, Wolverine's the scrapper you want in your corner when a brawl breaks out and Superman's the one who'll lend you both his brains and brawn. But Robin...he's the guy that you could almost be.

His appeal is twofold. First, he's just a normal kid. Granted, he's a great athlete and a gifted detective, but he doesn't possess a healing factor and he hasn't been injected with a Super-Soldier Serum. Second, and perhaps more importantly, underneath those red and green tights beats the heart of a teenager—with all of a teenager's baggage. And if similarly aged readers can sympathize with that, well, then mission accomplished, according to Chuck Dixon, who's been writing Drake's exploits for six years in the monthly *Robin* series and in the three mini-series that preceded it.

"Adolescence has got to be the worst part of your life," Dixon laughs. "Trying to make it through to the other side with a decent image of yourself is tough." And Dixon's goal with Robin was to make him a lead character who continually evolved, who faces doubts just like most kids Drake's age. "I think that's everybody," says Dixon. "Everybody's evolving."

"Robin's not just written as a 5-foot-tall adult," stresses Staz Johnson, *Robin*'s penciler, who likes how problems weigh on the character's mind. "He's not just a superhero, he's a kid. In the back of his mind, even when he's kicking some bad guy's butt, he's still worried about these things."

And Drake has only himself to blame for his situation. Dixon puts it plainly: "Tim Drake basically blackmailed Batman into giving him a chance as Robin."



Robin's "teddy incident" left Tim with a banished girlfriend and a grounding from his dad.

But at least he had good intentions. At an early age, Drake recognized one of the original Robin's moves as identical to those once used by the youngest member of The Flying Graysons, Dick Grayson; through that, Drake figured out that Robin was Grayson and Batman was Grayson's mentor, Bruce Wayne. But it wasn't until after the death of Jason Todd, the second Robin, that he saw the need to use that morsel of info. With Batman teetering closer and closer to the edge of insanity, Drake sought out Grayson and asked him to retake the role of Robin—knowing only the Boy Wonder could save Batman from himself. Grayson declined, already settling into his Nightwing persona, so Drake became the third in a line of Robins.

This left Drake with a big problem. Unlike his predecessors, now Drake had to deal with hiding his secret identity from a parent, a soon-to-be stepmom *and* a housekeeper. If you think having a parent around isn't frustrating for a budding superhero, then YOU try coming up with an explanation of why you would disappear from your room every night.

And that's not all. His girlfriend Ariana is not really his girlfriend anymore. It all started when Ariana wanted to surprise her boyfriend by wearing a teddy and offered to take their relationship to a sexual level. Just as Drake suggested they wait, the couple was caught by her uncle and aunt, who jumped to an inaccurate conclusion, and Ariana and Drake were forbidden to see one another. Worse yet, he was grounded by his father when the elder Drake caught wind of the situation. And as we all know, a grounded Drake is a grounded Robin. Needless to say, Drake's civilian and heroic identities are beginning to collide.

"He's literally leading two lives," says Dixon. "Batman leads, like, a life-and-a-quarter. As Bruce Wayne, he can blow everybody off. But Tim, he's in high school, he's got a dad still around, he's got people watching him. And he's got to maintain social relationships.

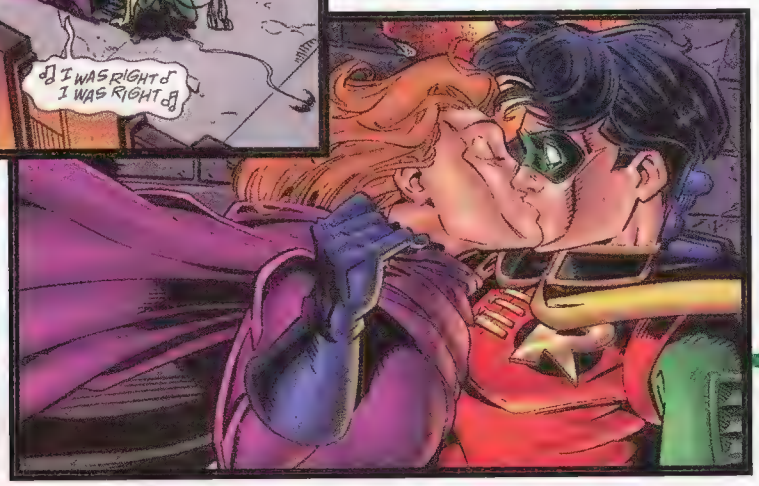
"The weight of his secret identity rests heavily on him because it's not just Robin; if he were exposed, Batman would be exposed."

In Robin's world, lying is a necessity—and one that takes its toll. "He's beginning to question how effective he is as either Tim Drake or Robin," Dixon explains.

A current storyline running from *Robin* #49-#51 has Drake in Europe, continuing his training and hoping to determine whether he should continue as Robin. That's a heavy enough matter to ponder, but mix in a run-in with old nemeses King Snake and Lady Shiva and you've got more than enough reason for some genuine teenage angst.

So Drake's got his challenges, just like most teens do—and yet *not* like most teens do. Although readers can empathize with Drake as he faces his dilemmas, most of the characters he interacts with cannot. Living in the adult world of Batman and his butler Alfred, Drake doesn't have anyone his age to talk to about all his problems. He can't tell any of his friends about his problems as Robin, 'cause it'd blow The Secret. And, as Robin, the only one who can empathize with his Robin problems is the flamboyant Spoiler, a.k.a. Stephanie Brown, a girl his age. But since she's only in the superheroics biz to impress him, Drake is still trying to convince her to quit for her own safety.

Though with Ariana out of the picture, Drake is growing more and more attracted to the tempting Ms. Brown. Even if he doesn't know why. "He's only a kid," explains Dixon.



With Ariana out of the picture, Tim is growing more attracted to The Spoiler—who already has the hots for Robin.

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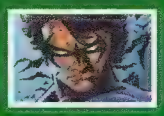
BOY WONDERINGS

Here's what Robin writer Chuck Dixon tells us the Boy Wonder thinks of his peers. ■ SA

Nightwing



"The Nightwing/Robin relationship is interesting because it's like two siblings. Tim looks up to Dick, too."

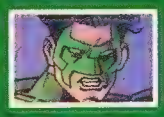
Superman

"Robin's just awestruck. Basically, Superman's got that reputation. Robin's never had that much contact with him, so Superman's like a movie star to him."

Wonder Woman

"Again, she's like a movie star. Robin's a little bit more than awestruck."

Green Lantern



"The same. It would be like, 'Wow, I wish I knew what these guys were talking about.'"

Flash

"He would know a little bit more about him because of Nightwing. It would be like your older brother's cool friend."

Green Arrow

"He sees Green Arrow as sort of ahead of him in maturity, and also Green Arrow is an awesome martial artist. That's something that Tim aspires to be, but I think he realizes he'll never be up to Green Arrow's level of confidence."

Superboy

"They have a mutual respect for one another. They're the kind of guys that would never be friends in high school because Robin considers Superboy likable but arrogant."

Huntress

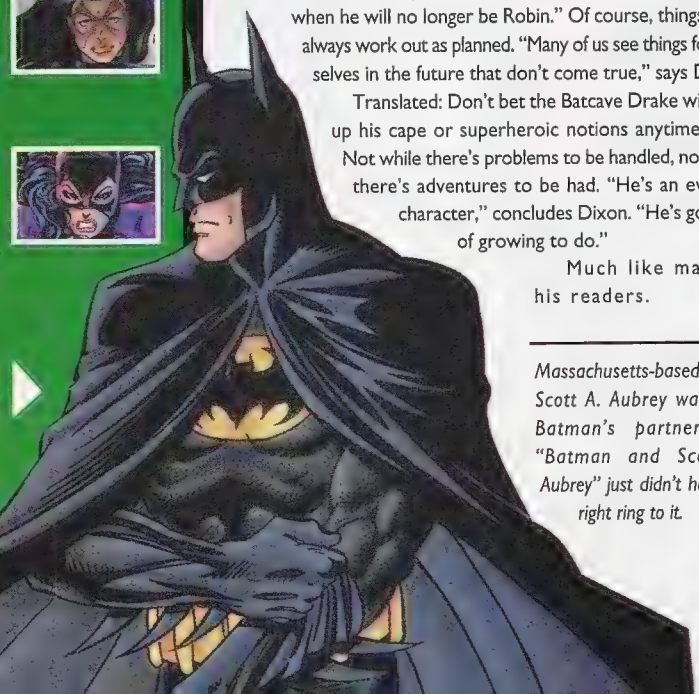
"Right now, he respects her. He thinks she's competent, he thinks she's trying hard to be a good vigilante, to not kill and to not have a real severe view of the world. But with a coming shift in the Huntress' methods, that's going to change. She's going to be scary."

Catwoman

"There's an obvious sexual component to that because he's hanging out with someone that looks like Catwoman. He regards her better than Batman does because he knows she's a thief, but she's only a thief. He knows, though she'd never admit it, when backed in the corner, she'd do the right thing."

Batman

"It's a father/son relationship, and Tim looks up to him. Batman considers them equal partners now; but Tim many times has said he is certain he's not Batman's equal."



"He can't figure out why he is so attracted to the Spoiler. It's obvious to us if he dates the Spoiler as Robin, he's free of the encumbrances of having to explain to her stuff, because she knows there's a secret that he can't tell. Plus, she's obviously loopy for him. That's hard to resist." Which explains why Dixon promises more of the Spoiler in the future, not just on an adventure level, but on a personal level.

Along those lines Dixon admits there's a big surprise in the next year, but he's tight-lipped. "The slightest little hint will give it away," says Dixon. But he will say this: the surprise will come from a story that starts mid-'98 and will come following a resolution to Drake and Ariana's separation, a resolution that Dixon says will offer surprises of its own. "It's going to grow out of this storyline that's been with Tim since the beginning, that he doesn't like leading this double life, that he doesn't think it's fair to the people around him."

The focus into Drake's girl problems will be just part of a larger transition for the book. Yes, *Robin* will feature more of Drake's private life, but the larger goal is to establish Robin as an independent hero, not just a sidekick with his own book. He'll have plenty of opportunities. After the European encounter with King Snake and Lady Shiva, Robin returns to Gotham in March's *Robin* #52 to find the city in ruins following a devastating earthquake. The disaster scatters the Bat-team, without means of communication. But worse, it releases a number of villains from Blackgate, including Spoiler's father, the Cluemaster, who will assume the role of Robin's chief adversary for the near future. "He's always going to be in the background, making life hell for Tim and his family, Stephanie and her mom. He's fixated on Robin and Stephanie as the authors of all his troubles."

But there's more in store for Robin than Cluemaster. "His rogues gallery is growing," says Dixon. "It's not all cast-off Bat-characters." For instance, although the Man-Bat will appear in a two-part story, he'll be joined by his son, who was born in the image of his father's winged alter-ego. There will also be a new villain at Drake's high school called the Scribbler. Dixon explains the character, who commits nuisance crimes that become dangerous, leaves cryptic clues scribbled on walls, baiting Robin to find the next crime. Dixon says Drake will have to use his detective skills to figure out which of his fellow students is to blame.

And what of the distant future, beyond next issue or next year? "Tim has pretty much attained his lifetime goal [of becoming] Robin," says Dixon. "He doesn't see himself in the future taking over Batman's role or becoming a character like Nightwing. He sees a day when he will no longer be Robin." Of course, things don't always work out as planned. "Many of us see things for ourselves in the future that don't come true," says Dixon.

Translated: Don't bet the Batcave Drake will hang up his cape or superheroic notions anytime soon. Not while there's problems to be handled, not while there's adventures to be had. "He's an evolving character," concludes Dixon. "He's got a lot of growing to do."

Much like many of his readers. W

Massachusetts-based writer Scott A. Aubrey was once Batman's partner. But "Batman and Scott A. Aubrey" just didn't have the right ring to it.

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CHROMIUM GRAPHICS INC.

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STRIP TEASE STARRING: Sergio Aragonés GROO

Who?

Groo, the Wanderer and his ever-faithful dog, Rufferto.

What?

"Groo is a barbarian who's very stupid," says Groo creator Sergio Aragonés. "But because he's very good with swords, everybody wants to use him to do their dirty work. But when you use a stupid barbarian who uses force more than intelligence, you lose every time."

Inspired by the European humor comics he read when he was young, Sergio Aragonés, famous for his *Mad* magazine work, created Groo in 1982 primarily as a humor book, but also as a social commentary. "The idea with Groo is to criticize everything," Aragonés says. "For example, if I want to talk about deforestation, there's always some kook who wants to use Groo to cut down trees and evict the people living in the forest. He's just a patsy. He represents force without brains."

On his own for years, Groo adopted Rufferto, a pampered royal dog who was looking for a change from his posh lifestyle. Although Groo originally thought Rufferto would make for good eating, Groo and Rufferto have since become best friends, and rarely think of leaving or eating each other.

Legends of Groo's stupidity have stood for years. Until now. All that changes when Groo gets smart. Well, kinda.

"While he becomes intelligent, he still gets abused by everybody," Aragonés says. "It's my way of showing that even 'smart' people can be very stupid in the decisions they make and the actions they take. His intelligence is artificial, so it's not going to stay. That's the advantage of writing a barbarian—he's not supposed to be too brainy. If he was, he'd hang up his swords and look for a better life."

Where?

Groo's current four-issue mini-series from Dark Horse starts this January. And if you've never read *Groo* before, don't worry! Each hilarious issue is virtually self-contained.

What's Next?

Following the mini-series, look for Aragonés to take a break from Groo to do some new Dark Horse projects. "We're in talks of doing a series of four projects in different genres—horror, gangsters, westerns and romance," he says. "All of them will use humor, of course. And I've got lots of Groo stories that I still want to tell. There will always be more Groo."

■ *Reporting by Matthew Brady*

Quick—turn the page!

GROO AND THE GLUT

by ARAGONÉS LETTERS: STAN SAKAI · COLORS: TOM LUTH · Mark EVANIER, POET

Within the town of Ralim—
They were proud of their successes—
In printing handsome folios—
Upon their wooden presses.
Each printer took a special pride—
From deep within his heart—
To make each item from his press—
A special work of art.

AH, IT HAS TAKEN **MONTHS** BUT I HAVE PRODUCED A FINE, ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPT!

THAT YOU HAVE!

Their work was so desired—
That a shortage soon resulted—
And those who could not get the books—
Felt angered and insulted.
They offered higher prices for—
The special acquisitions—
And soon the price was rising—
For the scarcest new editions.

I MUST HAVE THAT FOLIO! I WILL PAY ***FIFTY KOPINS!***

I SHALL PAY ***SIXTY!***

HMM... THERE IS WEALTH TO BE MADE BY OBTAINING THE FOLIOS AND THEN RESELLING THEM!

...ESPECIALLY IF WE ENCOURAGE THE NOTION THAT THEY ARE SCARCE AND ESCALATING IN VALUE!

The printers all grew wealthier—
Which was a great seduction—
To put less care into the work—
And hasten its production.
YOU ARE INCLUDING LESS TEXT IN THE FOLIOS!
OUR PATRONS DO NOT SEEM TO MIND! THEY LIKE LARGE, GARISH ILLUSTRATIONS!
And when they had exhausted—
All the stories worth relating—
Their choice of subject matter—
Grew a bit debilitating.
TALES OF THAT IDIOT GROO?
OUR PATRONS BUY THE FOLIOS TO INVEST! THEY WILL NOT CARE!
MOST DO NOT EVEN READ THEM!
And soon the sellers found themselves—
With no one left to buy—
For all had "rare collectors' books"—
In plentiful supply.
And just when the investors feared—
That prices might come down—
A most familiar figure chanced—
To wander into town.
FOLIOS
I AM SELLING THE RARE FIRST FOLIO OF GROO!
I HAVE THOUSANDS OF THEM!
EVERYONE HAS CRATES OF THEM!
DO NOT TOUCH
Now, Groo was not the smartest soul—
He never had been schooled—
HA! WHAT AN IDIOTIC-LOOKING MENDICANT!
WHAT AN UGLY OAF!
But even he could tell—
When he was being ridiculed.
WAIT A MINUTE...
He did not have to speak a word—
He did not have to say—
But from the look upon his face—
His dog could smell a fray.

The sellers ran in panic—
And abandoned their collections—
As Groo began to swing his sword—
In various directions.

I WILL TEACH YOU TO MOCK GROO!

NO! NO! I DO NOT READ THEM!

NEITHER DO I!

I DO NOT EVEN KNOW HOW TO READ!

CERTIFICATES OF AUTHENTICITY

RARE!

The people were quite fortunate—
He left them with their heads—
But all the printed folios—
Were burned or ripped to shreds.

MY BOOKS!

I SPENT MY LIFE SAVINGS ON THEM!

But then came a discovery—
And all the sellers gaped—
To see that several copies—
Had amazingly escaped.

SIX OF THEM!

THOSE ARE THE ONLY ONES IN EXISTENCE!

The prices started rising—
To a height beyond compare—
For folios of Groo were now—
Exceedingly rare.

So if you're seeking riches—
Of the most impressive kind—
Then buy as many copies—
Of this book as you can find.
And if you heed my counsel—
And invest as others do—
You'll be as smart and wealthy—
As a wanderer named Groo.

The End

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Wizard *casts the* Green Lantern *movie!*

Casting call

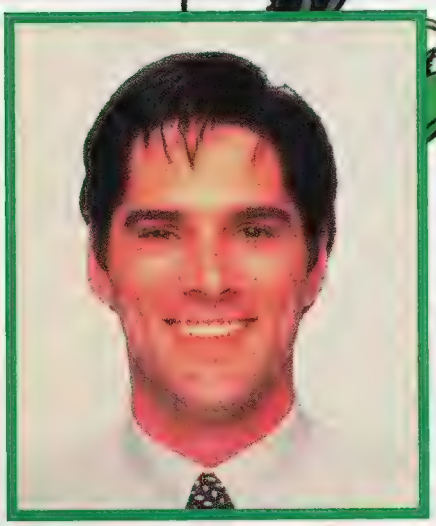
By a bunch of *Wizard* staffers

All photos not credited are from the Everett Collection.

Here's a brief list of what the Green Lantern movie *wouldn't* have—Pauly Shore, extended car chases, any scenes where the actors discuss French literature, and villains who feel compelled to utter such nonsensical statements as "Chill, Bird Boy!" and "Ice to see you."

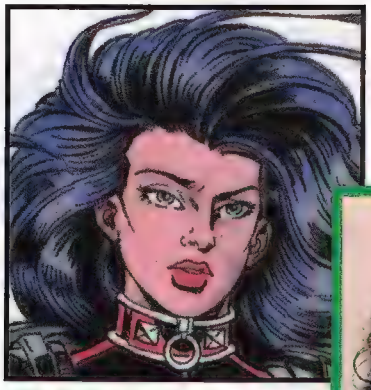
Instead, "Green Lantern: The Movie" would be packed with eye-popping space scenes, titanic battles between dastardly scum and larger-than-life heroes, heart-warming love scenes and acts of villainy and betrayal to churn a million stomachs. From beginning to end, the film would grab audiences by their sensitive parts, and not let go until the end credits.

There's no such film on the horizon, but that never stopped us. This is an idea whose time has come, and now's the time for *Wizard* to present its casting call for "Green Lantern: The Movie." Enjoy.



GREEN LANTERN

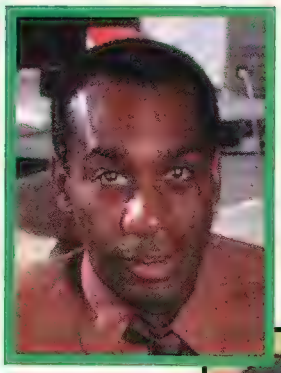
Thomas Gibson has shown through roles on "Chicago Hope" and "Dharma and Greg" that he can have the healthy combination of overconfidence, self-doubt, sense of humor *and* sensitivity that '90s Everyman Kyle Rayner has. 'Course, it doesn't hurt that he looks just like our Emerald Gladiator.



© Nicole Dill/Outline

DONNA TROY

From the land of Babealon comes Yancy Butler, our ex-Titan and ex-Darkstar Donna Troy. Butler plays a gutsy cop with a gentle nature each week on "Brooklyn South," making her a natural to portray Kyle's sometime girlfriend.

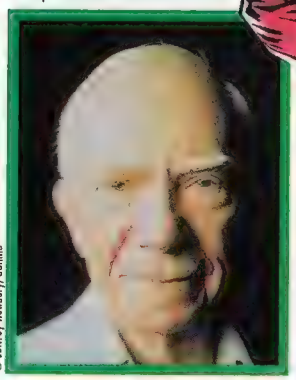


JOHN STEWART

Former GL John Stewart is fearless and tough-as-nails—even without his ring. Joe Morton's ability to portray toughness, as seen in "Terminator 2: Judgment Day," runs off the scale.

GANTHET

Our favorite Martian Ray Walston—from "My Favorite Martian"—is, facially, a dead ringer for our favorite Oan Ganthet. Ganthet's small frame and blue skin? Can you say "special effects"?



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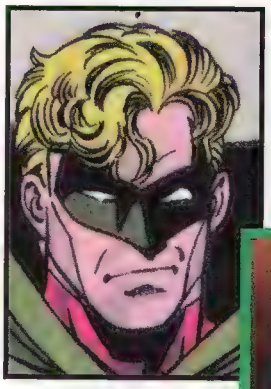
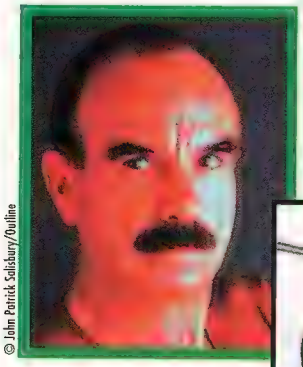


SENTINEL

Dashing and charismatic, Stephen Collins (Decker in "Star Trek: The Motion Picture") might as well be a Green Lantern, but without a ring. Funny thing, because Alan Scott (a.k.a. Sentinel) is a GL without a ring, too.



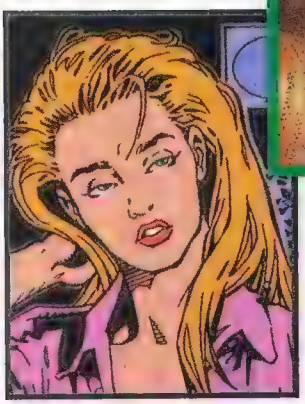
© John Patrick Salisbury/Outline

RADU STANCU

Watergate conspirator, radio commentator and all-around bad-ass G. Gordon Liddy looked in a mirror and saw Kyle Rayner's landlord Radu Stancu.

JADE

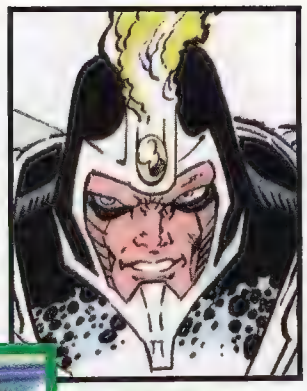
Green-skinned good girl Jade is always ready to put Rayner on the defensive. To play Jade, we'd go with Neve Campbell ("Scream"), who showed she can play a strong-willed heroine like nobody's business.



© Christopher Little/Outline

ALEXANDRA DEWITT

The ill-fated Alex had a photographer's eye and a supermodel's looks. With her devastating beauty, Peta Wilson, from TV's "La Femme Nikita," would make hearts sing playing GL's deceased girlfriend.



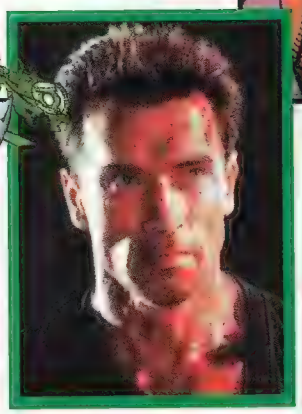
DR. LIGHT

Our Dr. Light would shed his loser image and be a dangerous superpowered mastermind. Remember Jeremy Northam's role as a dangerous assassin in "The Net"? We'd want him to do that again, this time as the bad Doctor.

PARALLAX

Cosmic menace Parallax, a.k.a. Hal Jordan, is charming and deadly. Richard Dean Anderson did charming and deadly as TV's MacGyver for seven years. Bad would be so good when Anderson plays this fallen-away GL.

© Neal Preston/Outline



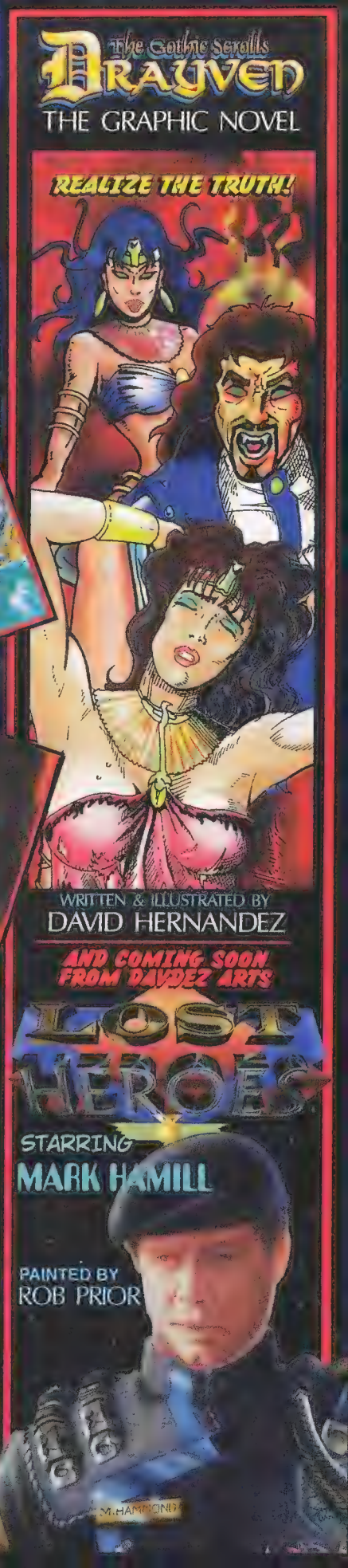
MAJOR FORCE

Bulky and psychotic, Major Force is a killer without remorse. Arnold Schwarzenegger graduated from Bulky & Psychotic U. with honors. Just check out his performance in "The Terminator." Now, think "Major Force."

© Gerardo Somoza/Outline

FATALITY

She's mean and anti-green! Fatality screams for an actress who can kick ass and take names. Angela Bassett plays a gun-toting mama in the futuristic "Strange Days" and, in it, kicks a goodly deal of behind. She's our Fatality—and maybe Rayner's, too. W



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AND I SAW GLIMPSES SO BRIGHT,
SO INCREDIBLE, OF WHAT WAS TO COME,
THAT I MARVELED
AT THE DAWN OF
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Sticky Situati

'Wizard' analyzes the Spider-Man titles' current problems — and how we'd fix them

WHAT'S WRONG WITH SPIDER-MAN?

Marvel's premiere superhero still stars in four monthly titles, still possesses the proportionate strength of a spider and still goes to grad school as Peter Parker, but the red-and-blue clad Web-head is losing to the one force he's powerless against: the fans.

After a string of failed storylines, Marvel attempted to reboot the character a year ago with a stronger focus on what made Spidey great, enlisting the strongest core of artistic talent the Spidey books have seen in ages. But even with that injection of talent, Spidey's popularity and sales hover at an all-time low.

So why are fans staying away? It doesn't take a Spider-genius to figure out that Spidey, well, hasn't exactly been Spidey since the reboot. Fans are noticing that everybody's favorite wall-crawler hasn't been shown at his best. And Marvel's current Spider-Man creative team senses something's outta whack; another Spidey revamp is set to start in June. (See "Wizard News" for more details.)

With that in mind, we here at *Wizard* Central thought we'd remind fans why Spidey's the most kick-ass hero ever created by listing his 10 greatest strengths and how the current state of Spider-Man measures up to each.

SENSE OF HUMOR

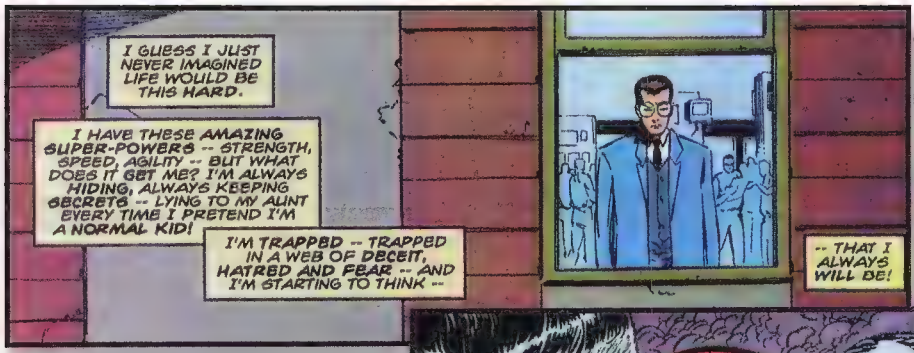
THE WAY IT SHOULD BE: Forget Deadpool and Hitman—Spider-Man should be the wittiest hero in all of comics. His clever, well-timed Spider-banter doesn't just distract villains—it's legitimately funny! We're talkin' laugh-out-loud funny. Regardless of whether he razzes J. Jonah Jameson by surprising him in his private elevator or taunts Mr. Hyde into a

Spidey should be the wittiest hero in all of comics.

clumsy rage, Spidey is the Jerry Seinfeld of comics.

THE WAY IT IS: On the whole, Spidey's about as funny as Carrot Top. Quips like "That kind of cornball dialogue is as *dead* as the *Macarena*!" (as seen in *Amazing Spider-Man* #428) is what's supposed to pass as clever Spider-dialogue these days. And at times when there are hints of genuine humor, many times it goes way over the top by forcing three jokes per panel. The most recent examples of more successful Spider-humor are from straightforward Spidey books

BY THE *WIZARD* STAFF



LEFT: Peter's double life should be so burdensome that he can't confide in anyone.

BELOW: Being Spider-Man has gotten in the way of every relationship Peter has ever had.

like *Untold Tales of Spider-Man* (which was canceled) or *Peter Parker: Spider-Man* where the more restrained humor takes a serious back seat to character interaction and plot development. A painful lesson learned here is that the only thing worse then no comedy is bad comedy.

Current Grade: D

SECRET IDENTITY

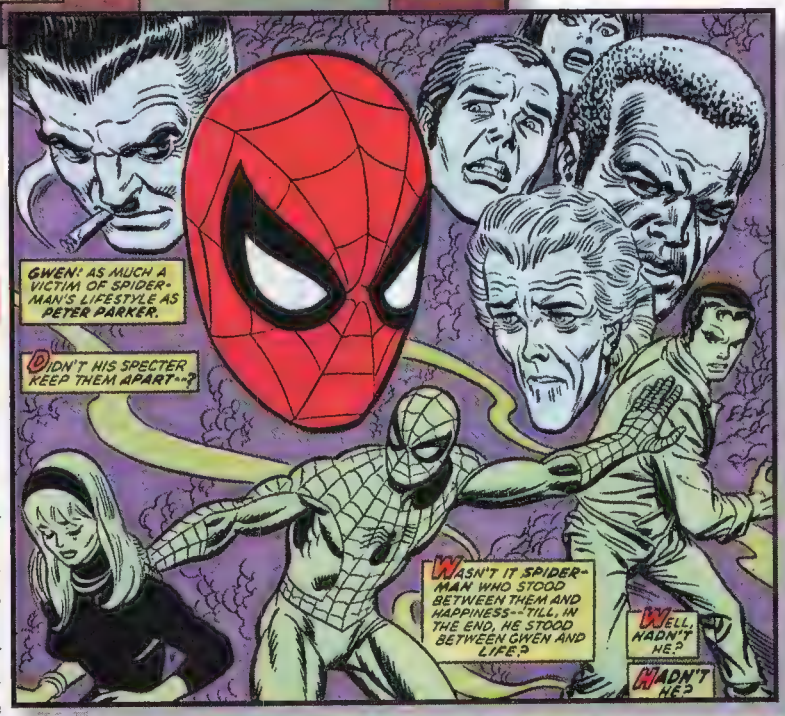
The Way it Should Be: It's a *secret*. Translation: NOBODY KNOWS IT. Mary Jane doesn't know it. Daredevil doesn't. Aunt May doesn't. That way, Peter Parker's double life should be so burdensome that he can't confide in anyone as himself OR as Spidey.

Though, we admit, it used to be cool that Norman Osborn (a.k.a. the original Green Goblin) was the only one who knew Peter was Spider-Man; whenever they confronted each other, you could cut the dramatic tension with a chainsaw.

The Way it Is: The golden rule was that Peter and Spider-Man's lives were separate. Now it's been broken and what was once a tightrope walk of a double life has become a single one. Osborn knows Peter's Spidey. Mary Jane knows it. Daredevil knows it. Venom knows it. The Jackal knows it. Wolverine knows it. Hell, *X-Man* knows it. Why bother calling it a *secret* identity?

What was once Peter's biggest frustration—not being able to confide in anyone about either of his troubled lives—is no longer an issue, since he now has MJ or X-Man to lean on.

Current Grade: D



UNSTABLE RELATIONSHIPS

The Way it Should Be: Being Spider-Man has its price. 'Specially since being Spidey always gets in the way of every relationship Peter Parker has. Whether it be missing a hot date by oversleeping from a long night as Spidey, or missing a hospital visit with Aunt May because Scorpion's got it in for J. Jonah Jameson, Peter's always juggling his personal life with his superhero one.

The Way it Is: Spidey's still causing havoc with his one relationship: his marriage to Mary Jane. And though they're both seeing a marriage counselor, Peter's still either late or misses them completely because he's off fighting Morbius near the Empire State University campus. But the buck stops with Mary Jane. She's really become Peter's only unstable relationship. While Peter has made peace with the fact he will always be Spider-Man, being Spidey still screws with his life.

Current Grade: C

DEATH

The Way it Should Be: Death created Spidey. The murder of his Uncle Ben taught him "with great power comes great responsibility" and caused

The "death" of the original Green Goblin (a.k.a. Norman Osborn) has haunted Peter every day since.

Most fanboys could probably relate to Pete's pre-marriage social life.

him to become a crimefighter in the first place. And whenever someone close to him died, it had significant impact, like his girlfriend Gwen Stacy and her dad.

And another thing—dead should mean just that: DEAD! No resurrections or miraculous secret recoveries. Death shouldn't be used for shock value and, thus, will have more impact.

THE WAY IT IS: Death is a joke. Let's count the resurrected folks: Dr. Octopus, The Jackal, The Spider-Clone, Kraven (in the form of the original Kraven's...son? Ugh.), Spidey's parents (they came back as robots) and, most insultingly, Norman Osborn. Osborn, in particular, is a giant no-no. His death, following his murder of Gwen Stacy, constantly haunted Peter Parker, moreso than when he was alive. Now that Osborn has recently resurfaced after 24 whole years of continuity to say he was "recovering," his reappearance is a clear-cut indictment of *all* comics further proving that character deaths have exactly zero impact these days. Hacked-out shock-value storylines are no substitute for good writing.

CURRENT GRADE: F (with regret there is no lower grade)

YOUTH

THE WAY IT SHOULD BE: He's young! Peter Parker's a single guy in his mid-20s, living on his own and going to grad school—all the while trying to make sense of his disastrous social life. Because of this, he connects with the average comic fan. (Who, odds are, is single, young, goes to school, has problems with his social life and aspires to live on his own.)

THE WAY IT IS: Peter's married and his daughter supposedly died during childbirth—these two facts give the perception him being older than he really is. Though still a young guy, Peter suddenly has no connection to the average comic fan. And, to its credit, the current creative team has recognized this by trying to de-age Peter with his return to grad school. So far, it's not been enough.

But there may yet be light at the end of the tunnel as plans currently call for Peter and Mary Jane to separate, perhaps by divorcing. And as for the stillborn Spider-baby? We hope it never, ever, EVER rears its ugly head. If there's ever a chance for Peter to regain his youth, this is the way to go.

CURRENT GRADE: C

HE'S POOR

THE WAY IT SHOULD BE: He never has money. Of all the classic superheroes, Spidey's the only hero who struggled to make ends meet. After a hard day of superheroing, he'd come home to his average apartment and find 1) his fridge is empty, 2) a stack of bills need paying, and 3) he forgot to do laundry. The charm of Peter Parker was that he always hung around the *Daily Bugle* offices trying to scrounge up a freelance photography assignment. (That, and he'd stay up all night to sew his own Spider-costumes, to boot!)

THE WAY IT IS: What money problems? Married to a supermodel must have its financial perks, even when Mary Jane doesn't currently have a job. With the cost of living as it is, grad school not being cheap, and Peter being the sole bread-winner, it's disappointing that he rarely gets super-uptight about bills—and when he does, it becomes a priority for that one panel it's mentioned in; it doesn't seem like it's a real concern because of the lack of follow-up. Let's see a more desperate Peter hounding ol' JJJ at the *Bugle* for work, to make it more real.

CURRENT GRADE: D

SUPPORTING CAST

THE WAY IT SHOULD BE: They're Peter Parker's support, NOT Spider-Man's. Whether it be Betty Leeds, Mary Jane, Robbie Robertson or Aunt May, at least one of them interacts with

You never see Superman or Wolverine struggle to make ends meet like Spidey does.

Peter every issue. They merely *react* to Spider-Man, not really interact. The only times Spidey will encounter Peter's cast are when they are in trouble and Pete—as Spidey—will keep a "guardian angel" eye on them... *from a distance.*

Peter's cast needs to be involved in his life for them to: 1) give him more worries, and 2) be interesting in and of themselves.

Add to the mix one vital ingredient: the competition. In the past, it's been former school bully Flash Thompson and rival freelance photographer Lance Bannon. Having a competitor opens things up even wider in the Problem Dept. for ol' Pete.

THE WAY IT IS: Who really supports? Now that Pete's married, MJ is practically his exclusive support. Getting him out to see what used to be his consistent supporting cast doesn't happen all that often.

But, then again, his old supporting cast doesn't exactly seek Peter out either. And that's because a lot of the former support is off doing their own thing or have completely disappeared. Betty Leeds? She's too busy becoming the next Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist. Flash Thompson? He's degenerated into a self-pitying alcoholic loser who's only seen in the book when he's pining for Betty's affections or moping. Harry Osborn? He's dead. Aunt May? She's dead, too—and now that she's gone, the current Spidey team has realized its error by replacing May with MJ's elderly Aunt Anna.

Because of their broken ties to Peter, you just don't care as much about his supporting cast like you used to.

CURRENT GRADE: D

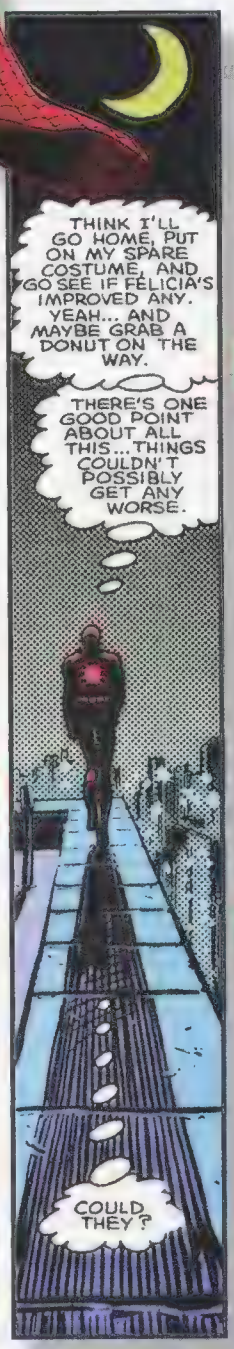
THE COSTUME

THE WAY IT SHOULD BE: The classic costume rocks. It's extremely detailed with the rockin' Spider-web motif, and those GIANT eyes which set a new standard in comic book facemasks. How many times does Marvel have to screw with something to realize there's nothing wrong with it?

THE WAY IT IS: Thank God the classic costume is back. But with the upcoming "Identity Crisis" story, Spidey won't be wearing it! He will be wearing not one, but *four* all-new non-spidery costumes. After past failed costume updates like the black-and-white costume from *Secret Wars*, the sweatshirted Scarlet Spider outfit and the redecoed outfit from *Sensational Spider-Man* #1, you'd think Marvel would learn from its thrice-failed "improvements" and give the fans the costume they want.

CURRENT GRADE: A (but the second he gets a new one...F)

The classic costume kicks ass (left) and no matter how bad the day goes, Pete keeps his chin up (below).



THE DEPRESSED OPTIMIST

THE WAY IT SHOULD BE: Peter Parker's the lovable loser. No matter what is thrown his way, no matter how unhappy the ending...Peter will get kind of lost in them, but in the end, overcome the obstacles in his path. He's upbeat in a doomed kinda way.

For example, when he first fights the Hobgoblin (*Amazing Spider-Man* #239), Spidey burns his hand putting out a gas fire while Hobby gets away. But, not content with saving the day otherwise, our hero dwells on the fact that Hobgoblin might know his secret ID, Doc Ock is also on the loose, that current gal-pal the Black Cat is hospitalized and in critical condition, and that he's hungry. He hangs his head and resolves that the day's one good point was that "things couldn't possibly get any worse." And then they do.

THE WAY IT IS: Since we've established his secret ID, money or supporting cast problems don't impact him as much as they should, there aren't many obstacles in Peter's life aside from his shaky marriage and his supervillain problems as Spider-Man. The few problems that do arise just don't have the depth necessary to draw enough emotion or connection from the reader.

CURRENT GRADE: C

HE'S SMART

THE WAY IT SHOULD BE: He's a scientist! So, duh, he might have normal problems, but not normal intelligence. He's on the ball with modern physics and chemistry. What makes Spider-Man neat is that he can use his smarts in the labs at E.S.U. or to momentarily weaken the powers of electromagnetic villain Will-o'-the-Wisp by throwing him into an electrical turbine. Spidey's a thinking man's superhero and though his decisions might not always be the right ones, they always makes sense at the time.

THE WAY IT IS: For a while now, he hasn't had a true, entertaining test of his Spider-noggin. Though plans call for Spidey to use his scientific knowledge in the upcoming "Identity Crisis." But instead of in chemistry or physics, he's using it to help the Prowler build him a cybernetic armor. It doesn't make much sense at face value, but we'll wait and see.

CURRENT GRADE: C

ROGUES GALLERY

THE WAY IT SHOULD BE: The A-list classics. The Vulture. Lizard. Scorpion. Sandman. Electro. Mysterio. Rhino. Spidey has the best rogues gallery in all of comics. (Take *that*, Batman!) But new villains like Venom, Hobgoblin or Carnage can be introduced and fit seemlessly into Spidey's rogues gallery.

All of these villains work because they have three basic components. 1) Something unique in their name, look and/or powers. 2) Their motivations are on a scale that Spidey can handle—meaning no world dominators or cosmic beings like Dr. Doom or Thanos. 3) They are a model of simplicity—i.e., less means more. Venom is a bigger, twisted version of the black-costumed Spidey; Electro's name and costume screams

electricity; Rhino is an unstoppable behemoth in a grey costume with a horn on his forehead.

THE WAY IT IS: Where are they? The only A-list villains of late have been B-list posers Kraven, Hammerhead and Black Tarantula...or D-list losers like Stegron, Technomancers and the Living Pharaoh. Sure, the current team has resurrected former A-list classics like the original Doc Ock and Green Goblin...but, as stated above, that ain't the way to go. And the newer villains only seem to thrive on some stale revenge plot because they blame Spidey for something he probably didn't do (like Lady Octopus and Kaine).

But a tip of the hat to Team Spidey for reviving a few of his rogues gallery. The new and improved Shocker has been transformed from a pushover to powerhouse. The more modified Mysterio looks cool, too. Even Morbius has never looked as vicious. And a more concerted effort has been made to return Venom to his evil roots.

CURRENT GRADE: B...and climbing

ENVIRONMENT

THE WAY IT SHOULD BE: Spidey's perfect environment is a reactive one, like at the *Daily Bugle* office where Peter can *become* Spider-Man. The *Bugle* is where Peter is on the pulse of the city and a breaking story of local trouble can brew at a moment's notice. How else would Peter find out instantly that the Juggernaut's tearing up downtown AND get photos for the *Bugle* in order to pay the bills? (And you gotta admit it's fun watching Peter trying to find an unoccupied broom closet to change into Spidey!)

Peter's perfect environment is the E.S.U. campus, where he can thrive both socially and intellectually. He can hang out at the student lounge, work in the lab with his lab partner, smooth talk his professors, take crucial exams and write term papers at the computer lab—in a perfect world, there's probably no other place that Peter would rather be.

THE WAY IT IS: It seems the only time you see Pete hanging around at the *Bugle* is when a change in scenery is needed in a story. And when he's there, he's not champing at the bit for assignments. He and MJ currently attend E.S.U., but aside from them physically being on campus, you'd never know they had coursework. Where is the lab work? The pandering to professors? The cramming for exams? The writing of term papers?

CURRENT GRADE: D

Pete should be hounding *Bugle* editors for work.

Hobgoblin fits the three rules of Spidey villains perfectly.

UNWAVERING ETHICS

THE WAY IT SHOULD BE: Peter Parker will always do the right thing. He'll screw up his personal life, give you the shirt off his back, lay his life on the line to beat the bad guys or help out somebody down on his luck. That, along with his unwavering belief that all life—even that of the vilest supervillain—is worth saving. He's the definition of the word hero.

THE WAY IT IS: Though a ball was dropped when Spidey tried to kill the Green Goblin (by swinging a bag full of lit pumpkin bombs into his gut in *Peter Parker* #75), the Spidey creative teams have been pretty faithful to the "hero" part of this superhero.

CURRENT GRADE: B

The Wizard staff is a firm believer that nothing in comics is more satisfying than a great Spider-Man story. Nothing.

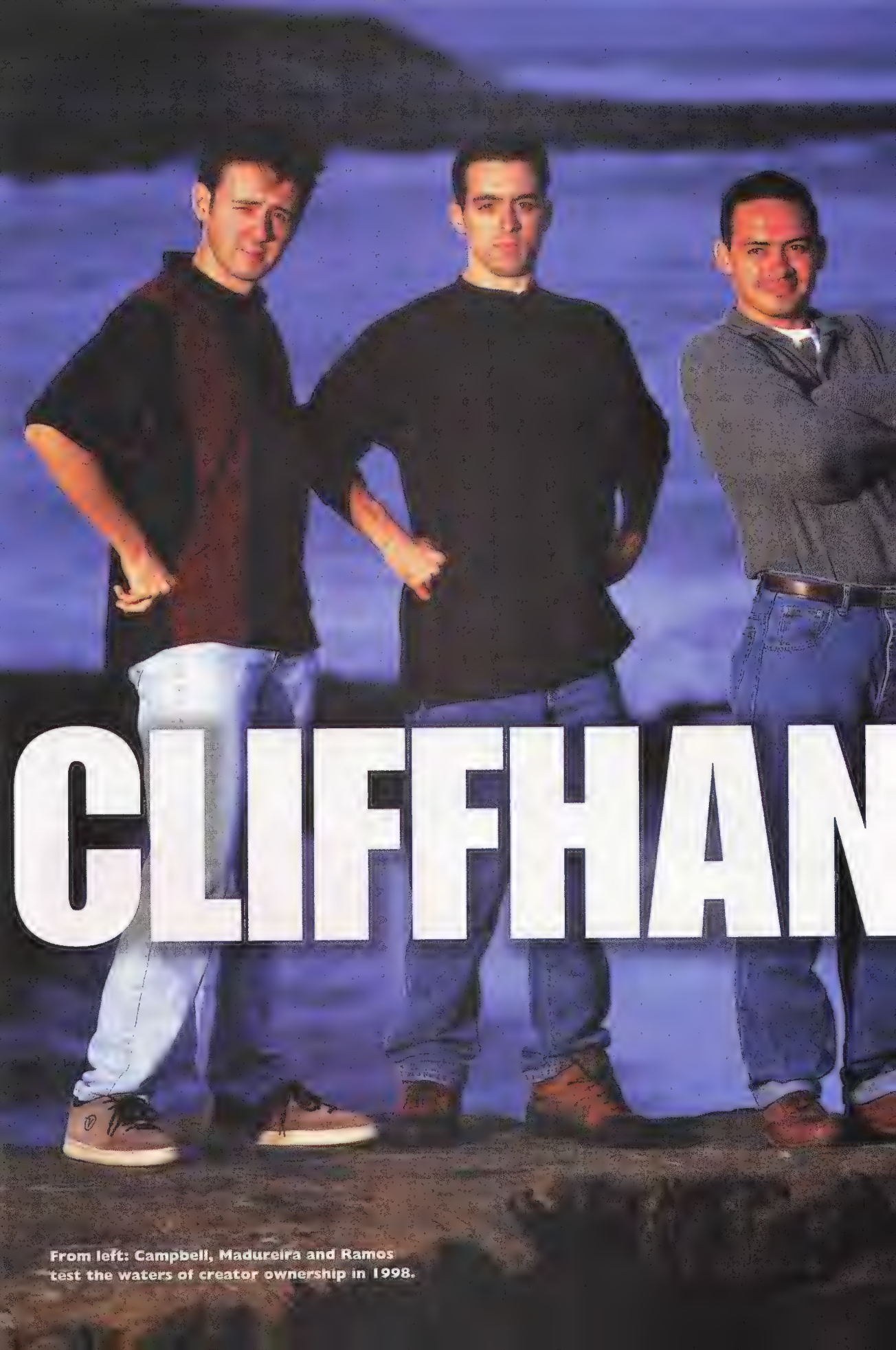
THE FUTURE

Yeah, Spidey's going through a rough period, but he's weathered bad storms before. After all, during the 1970s, Spidey endured his first bout with the Spider-Clone, rode around in the Spider-Mobile, and wore polyester bell-bottoms as Peter Parker.

And with another Spidey revamp slated for June, Marvel is promising a traditonal plan. For starters, the four Spider-Man titles will be pared down to two and Peter and MJ are going to split. And judging by Marvel's recent revamping of its core heroes with the "Heroes Return" relaunch, "revamp" means a back-to-basics direction with all-star creative teams that emphasize the best qualities of each character it tackles.

We hope the Spider-Man writers and editors get in tune with bringing Spidey back into form—or maybe it's time to get new blood to do the job. Either way, what's clearly needed are people who know what originally made Spider-Man great, what makes him great and what *will* make him great.

Spidey is a character that has so much promise, that he's worth keeping your eye on. Comicdom will agree: Spider-Man is the greatest hero ever created. Case closed.



From left: Campbell, Madureira and Ramos test the waters of creator ownership in 1998.

THE WIZARD Q&A:

Red hot artists JOE MADUREIRA, J. SCOTT CAMPBELL and HUMBERTO RAMOS bolt high-profile assignments for the risky world of creator ownership

GER

By Matthew Senreich
Photos by John W. McDonough

JIM LEE IS LATE. Over an hour late. And no one knows where he is.

Waiting for him are the three young superstar artists Joe Madureira, J. Scott Campbell and Humberto Ramos, none of whom seem to mind his absence. The three are lounging on the couch in Lee's WildStorm Productions office in San Diego, staring intensely at the empty chair in front of them where their new boss should be. Madureira, who gained critical acclaim on *Uncanny X-Men*, flew across the continent from New York. Ramos, who gained speed on DC Comics' *Impulse*, came all the way from Mexico. And Campbell, who rose to fame on WildStorm's own *Gen13*—well, he lives only 20 minutes from the WildStorm studio. But they've all congregated here to chat about Cliffhanger, their upcoming new creator-owned imprint which Lee will be publishing through his branch of Image Comics. "And *we're* supposed to be the young and irresponsible ones," laughs the laid-back Campbell. Madureira just rolls his eyes and smiles. Ramos is anxious to get started. "Jim had a late night. I think he was finishing up an issue of *Divine Right*," says Ramos in his slight Mexican accent.

But Cliffhanger isn't really about Lee. It's about Campbell, Madureira and Ramos. It's about the next wave of talented artists making the jump from established properties to creator-owned comics, similar to the formation of Image Comics back in 1992. Campbell's new title *Danger Girl* launches Cliffhanger in March, followed by Madureira's *Battle Chasers* in April and Ramos' *Crimson* in May.

Wizard met the young crew during Cliffhanger's early developmental stages to discuss their risky career move to form this bold new imprint. Lee is supposed to be involved in the interview, too, but the trio grows restless. "Let's just do this without him," laughs Campbell. "I'm sure he'll show up sometime in the middle or for dinner afterwards."

WIZARD: To get right to the point, why do this? Why leave your high-profile assignments to start a brand-new imprint at such a young age?

MADUREIRA: I guess you can say that right now, we're at the height of our popularity, and if we were going to do something like this, now would be the best time. I was burnt-out on *Uncanny X-Men* and just felt the need to do something I could put my heart into. Doing my own creator-owned title and having our own new line, we won't have any baggage of any other company sneaking into our universe.

CAMPBELL: When Image first started, it was the best of the best in comics. But as it grew larger, it certainly didn't have that best-of-best feel. What we're hoping to do with this label is set a precedence of quality back into comics.

RAMOS: I think we all came to the point in our careers where we felt that we had stories of our own to tell. We're three young guys doing their own ideas, each completely different from the other and all in one new line.

"THIS LINE ISN'T ABOUT POPULARITY. IT'S ABOUT DOING SOMETHING THE WAY THAT I WANT IT DONE."

So why did you three in particular band together?

CAMPBELL: We were all friends before, all had our books coming out at the same time and thought, "Wouldn't it be cool to do it together?" The three of us symbolize security in numbers. I wouldn't have had the nerve or the ego to do a new label with just me. I mean, who would care? It only has importance if there's a group of talented guys doing something new. It seems like we are the next graduating class without us dressing up to symbolize it. [*Laughs*] But technically, that's what it is.

RAMOS: We were all looking to publish our titles under existing companies. The timing was there to start something new. It definitely helps when you're working with guys that you really like and admire.

VITAL STATS: Joe Madureira

Cliffhanger Book: *Battle Chasers*
Occupation: Plotter/penciler/co-founder of new Cliffhanger imprint
Born: December 3, 1974
Base of Operations: Long Island, N.Y.
Career Highlights: Penciler of Marvel's *Deadpool* and *Uncanny X-Men*
Favorite Cliffhanger: "*Daredevil* #181, where Elektra died. Bullseye stabs her in the gut, and she crawls on her hands and knees to Matt Murdock's arms and collapses. When the issue ends, you don't know if she's dead or not. I was so antsy to get the next issue."

MADUREIRA: It's like an extra kick in the pants or a friendly competition. You see what the other guys are working on and you just want to rush home and start working to do something better.

Do you guys feel this venture will affect your careers in any way?

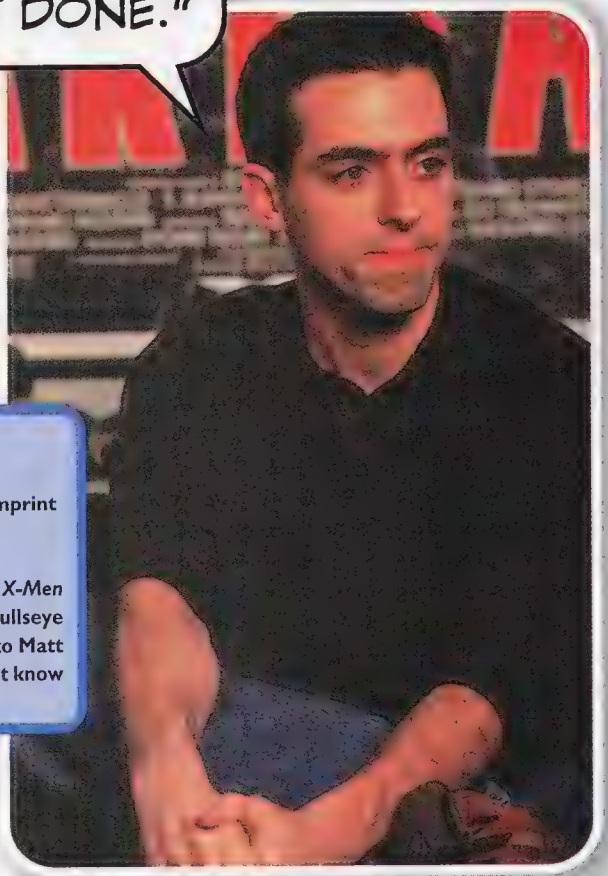
MADUREIRA: It was great being on *Uncanny X-Men* because everyone reads the X-Men. It's the highest-selling comic, and it was great being perceived as one of the most popular artists. But this line isn't about popularity. It's about making a living and enjoying the work I'm doing. To be honest, I really stopped enjoying my work on X-Men and it was affecting the quality of art. It's about doing something the way that I want it done and having control over my property, instead of a huge company forcing me to draw things that I may not necessarily agree with.

CAMPBELL: To me, I want to somewhat legitimize myself as somebody that isn't a one-hit wonder with *Gen13*. I want people to realize that there's a whole mess of ideas in my head and that *Gen13* was just one of them. One of the most frustrating things is that I see myself being more like a creator that would exist in the movie industry, because you constantly get to try new ideas; move from project to project. Unfortunately, in comics, that's suicide. Whenever you do something new, there's constant fan backlash. It's frustrating as a creator who wants to continually do new things. That's one of the main reasons I was detoured from wanting to become a Disney animator. I couldn't handle being locked into drawing a particular way for the rest of my life. If anything, *Danger Girl* will break me out of the mold and lead me into whatever I decide to do next.

RAMOS: This isn't going to hurt *me* in any way. [*Laughs*] If anything, being associated with Joe and Jeff will only help me. I think that anything you do with your heart is well-received.

CAMPBELL [*Nodding in agreement*]**:** For the first time I can remember, I drive my car and it crosses my mind how much it would suck if a truck hit me, because I wouldn't have been able to finish *Danger Girl* #1. I have *got* to get this thing out. Even doing *Gen13*, I never had this feeling of excitement for my work.

MADUREIRA: Before in our careers, we were doing stuff for somebody else. I was drawing the X-Men for Marvel. Jeff was doing



Gen13 for Jim. Humberto was doing stuff with DC. But this is for us. We may lose popularity. We may not sell 150,000 copies, but we'll hone our skills as artists and put out our best work. We're doing it because it's stories that we want to tell. How can this not be our best work?

What exactly are each of your titles about?

CAMPBELL: *Danger Girl* is almost like a "James Bond" meets "Indiana Jones." It will have characters that will actually get hurt and bleed. They are regular people doing extraordinary things versus extraordinary people that do what I think are ordinary things. I'm trying to do angles and panels in my art that give you a sense of theatrical-wide grandeur, or whatever you want to call it. I want each issue to feel like you just saw

VITAL STATS: J. Scott Campbell

Cliffhanger Book: *Danger Girl*

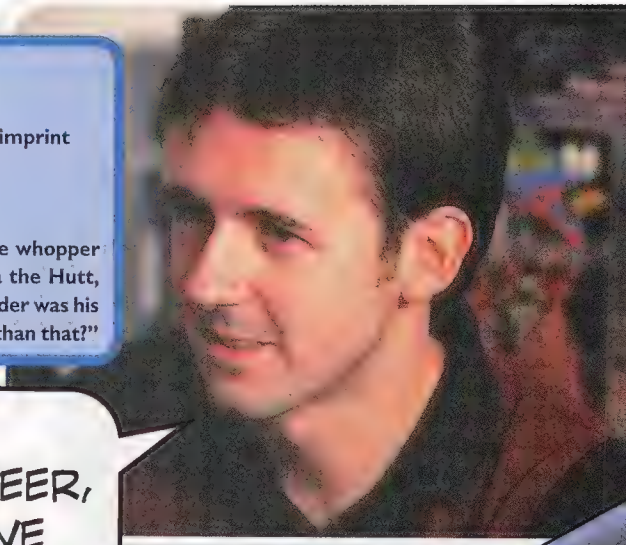
Occupation: Plotter/penciler/co-founder of new Cliffhanger imprint

Born: April 12, 1973

Base of Operations: San Diego, Calif.

Career Highlights: Co-creator of Image's *Gen13*

Favorite Cliffhanger: "'The Empire Strikes Back' had three whopper cliffhangers. You got Han Solo frozen and taken to Jabba the Hutt, Luke getting his hand cut off and Luke getting told Darth Vader was his father. And then having to wait three years. What's bigger than that?"



"NOT WANTING TO COMPLETELY RUIN MY CAREER, I REALIZED I HAD TO [HAVE ATTRACTIVE WOMEN] IN *DANGER GIRL*."

Campbell's *Danger Girl*

20 minutes of a movie that continues on and on.

One of the things that fans seem to enjoy about my style is my ability to draw attractive women. Knowing that and not wanting to completely ruin my career, I realized I had to incorporate that into *Danger Girl*. My goal is to make the most fun comic book out there.

MADUREIRA: I was always into fantasy. Stuff like *Dungeons & Dragons* or *Final Fantasy VII* for Sony PlayStation. What I'm trying to do is combine everything I like from fantasy, the characters and environments, and mix them with cool technology like big robots and machinery. My story follows a group of characters that come together accidentally and end up going on all of these adventures together. They eventually become heroes, even though that's not what they set out to do. And they'll each have obstacles to overcome from their individual pasts. I'm creating a world and characters that I can do anything I want with, whether that means killing them off or making them into gods. It will be a very visual book, very cinematic and almost like "Indiana Jones" in its action. I want to make it feel like a movie.

Up till now, all fantasy books are about is a wizard, a dude shooting arrows on a horse or a guy with a big ax. *Battle Chasers* won't be a Conan comic. There are colorful villains that are in outlandish costumes, not spandex, and our stories, especially my own, will definitely have the superhero action and melodrama.

What about you, Humberto?

RAMOS: My book is about vampires. Most people feel like the vampire theme is overdone, but the secret is how you tell the story. In my story, vampires are a bit different. It's a personal rendition of what's a vampire, how you become a vampire and how you accept being a vampire. It'll also have a lot of action and a lot of comedy. You don't think of comedy with vampires, but it will have a very fun mood to it all. Besides the vampires, the story will have monster hunters, witches, werewolves and every single creature that you can find in the night. I'm trying to work in every scary tale that you heard when you were a kid about all the creatures of the night, and put every single one of them in this book in some capacity.

Okay, no offense, but you aren't considered writers. Do you feel that will affect the way your books will be perceived?

And if so, are you nervous about tackling the writing?

MADUREIRA: I'm going to be writing this book myself with a guy I met in advertising named Munier Sharrieff. I'm a little nervous only because I don't think artists get a chance when they want to tell stories their own way. When you see an artist is going to write, it's like, "Oh, God, he's an artist, he can't write." But artists are storytellers. [They] have their own ways of telling a story, which are probably more visually exciting. I might not offer you a better-written story than some of the writers out there, but I'll definitely tell my story in a different way that'll excite you. I'm not Frank Miller and I'm not going to write some literary masterpiece, but I think it will be a highly enjoyable book and hopefully even open people's eyes to how to tell a story in comics.

"IT DEFINITELY HELPS WHEN YOU'RE WORKING WITH GUYS THAT YOU REALLY LIKE AND ADMIRE."

CAMPBELL: I agree. With respect to the good writers in the industry, I don't think comic book writing is rocket science. I've already been very heavily involved in co-plotting *Gen13* over the years. I got a pretty good sense of what I like and what I don't like about stories. At the same time, I do realize that I don't have the skill to tackle the writing alone. So I am working with another guy by the name of Andy Hartnell. He's a friend of mine, and he's going to write *Danger Girl* with me. I always bounced ideas off of him for *Gen13*. As things went along, it just worked out for him to co-write *Danger Girl*. His biggest asset is in the dialogue department.

MADUREIRA: Not to sound cocky, but we can pretty much call up any comic writer and ask them to write our books, assuming they would accept. But I really want this to be mine. I want it to be my version of my characters, doing what I think they should be doing and talking how I think they should talk.

RAMOS [*Smiling*]**:** I'm different. I'm not so good with writing in English. [*Laughs*] But I have friends who can. I have these friends who tell really great stories set in amazing situations. They are Oscar Pinto and Francisco Haghembeck, who take my ideas and make them into great stories. It's hard enough for us foreigners to get work drawing comic books; you can imagine how much harder it is to write them. Since we're all from Mexico and our English isn't the greatest, we asked for help to script it. I asked Brian Augustyn [Ramos' former editor on *Impulse* and his co-creator on *Ash: Cinder & Smoke*], a guy who I really admire and is my really close friend.

[Ramos is interrupted as the office door opens, and Jim Lee strolls in. "Am I late?" he asks sarcastically, as he plops into his chair behind his desk and stares at everyone, smiling the whole time. "I'm ready when you are," Lee says, laughing. Ramos is the one to roll his eyes this time, while Campbell and Madureira bite their lips as they hold back their desire to bust on Lee.]

LEE: Just mix in quotes from me at the beginning of this article and people will think I was never late. [*Laughs*]

Sure, Jim. Anyway, how did this whole new line come about?

LEE: The concept was: Get some of the best young guys in the business together and do a brand-new imprint. Jeff [Campbell] was part of the [WildStorm] studio and had talked about doing *Danger Girl* early on. With Joe, I talked to him four years ago in the very earliest stages of Image Comics, when he'd just started working at Marvel. He was working on *Deadpool*, way before X-Men. I talked to him about doing something for

VITAL STATS: Humberto Ramos

Cliffhanger Book: *Crimson*
Competition: Penciler/co-founder of new Cliffhanger imprint
Born: November 27, 1973
Base of Operations: Mexico City, Mexico
Career Highlights: Penciler of Event's *Ash: Cinder & Smoke*; DC's *Impulse*
Favorite Cliffhanger: "When I found out Darth Vader was Luke's father in 'The Empire Strikes Back,' I couldn't believe it. I was left wondering, 'Is this true?' until I could finally go see 'Return of the Jedi' years later."

Ramos' *Crimson* stars reluctant vampire Alex Elder.

WildStorm, but he was under contract with Marvel. So I said, "Do a run on X-Men, get popular and whenever you think of doing anything else, give me a call." Soon as I heard he was leaving Marvel to create his own thing, I immediately contacted him. Basically, Jeff and Joe are friends—both had creator-owned projects—so I put the deal together. I have really been trying to stay in the background of all this; I'm their advisor.

Where did Humberto fall in?

LEE: We've all known Humberto for a long time. We knew he was doing this *Crimson* project and Jeff, Joe and I felt that a good third person for the line would make it stronger and solidify it. So we called Humberto. He was very agreeable and excited about it.

It's another tough question, but it almost seems like Humberto was tacked on at the end. Is there more to it than that?

LEE: These three guys gravitated toward one another out of a common respect for each other's work. That's really all it was, as opposed to, "Hey, let's find a guy who is going to be as hot and high up on the top 10 list." Humberto fit in with these guys. He gets along with them and is a talented artist. Whether or not he's a "hot" artist now is irrelevant. I feel Humberto will rise to that status.

CAMPBELL: We fully and strongly believe in Humberto's ability to produce a great comic book. Look at his *Impulse* run. There's a much more important aspect here than who is popular enough to join.

Humberto, how do you feel about being associated with these guys?

RAMOS: It gives me more of a challenge to reach their level. My book won't have the expectations of theirs, so there's less pressure. I'm honored that I was asked and that I'm going to get grouped with these guys. It'll probably help my book sell.

I hope people don't think that I was just added on. I realize that I'm the odd man in this group, but it just means I'll work extra hard to meet the level of expectation. The three of us make a good team. Let's leave it at that.

Will anyone else be joining? Rumor had it Mike Turner was originally asked, but declined.

LEE: My understanding is that Mike has an agreement with Top Cow still.

MADUREIRA: As for others, we are not looking to bring anyone else in right now.

CAMPBELL: In our first year, we'd like to make sure that we'll do okay by ourselves before we think about growing.

What about other people like Randy Queen or Mike Wieringo, who have been looking to do creator-owned projects?

CAMPBELL: The three of us work. I'm sure each one of us can think of two or three other guys that we know that could have been a part of this line too. But we've already been warned about the subject of stealing talent from other Image studios. We're not looking to do that. We just wanted a good group of three guys to launch an exciting new imprint.

What's the structure of this new company? Who's the leader?

LEE: It's an imprint of WildStorm and thus, the distribution, marketing and production will be taken care of by WildStorm. I'm there to give them my two cents, but they're the ones to determine the success of it. They'll determine whether the books come out on time and how they'll look.

RAMOS: And if we want to add someone, we'll probably do it like I was added. We'd talk about it amongst ourselves. It's a company of friends.

Whereas Homage is the writer's haven, this is almost like the artist's haven of creator-owned books. So why not just be a part of Homage?

LEE: That's one way of looking at it, but there are certainly artist-driven properties at Homage. Homage tends to have creator-owned books that are a little more retro, and appeal to a slightly off-the-beaten-track crowd. I thought, what better way to capture the attention [of fans] than through a new line which is clearly in the mainstream, but outside the superhero realm? This is for fanboys.

Will you guys ask Jim to do a book in your line?

CAMPBELL: Obviously, we would be honored.

And would you ever do a book in their line?

LEE: I don't know if it will happen any time soon. I am pretty wed to WildStorm. I see this line as the next generation. You can't go back to dressing like a teenager. So the possibility exists, but it's unlikely.

Do you consider this the second wave of Image Comics?

MADUREIRA: That's not a bad way to look at it.

CAMPBELL: I look at this as a way to get people excited about comics again. If that comes across as the second wave of Image, great.

RAMOS: Second wave or not, it's being with the people who I want to be with.

LEE: Though it's a bit different, I can definitely see it as the second wave. It's the second time that the biggest comic book names have gotten together to do their own thing. And they have us [the original Image founders] to look at any mistakes we made. So yes, I guess you can call it that because it's going to create a lot of excitement. Fans'll be excited.

Wizard Staff Writer Matthew Senreich has been known to create a lot of excitement himself. Unfortunately, it's gotten him arrested on three separate occasions already.

DANGER GIRL By J. Scott Campbell

It's "James Bond" meets "Indiana Jones." *Danger Girl* stars three non-superpowered women who embark on extraordinary spy-type missions. Besides an element of intrigue, look for the usual fun and campiness that Campbell brought to life in *Gen13*, as well as the one thing that fans expect most from him: hot babes.

"Beyond that," he notes, "all I'll say is that one of my goals of this series is to show that a car-chase scene in a comic book can actually work."

BATTLE CHASERS By Joe Madureira

Madureira's unnamed wizard in *Battle Chasers*

Set in a *Dungeons & Dragons*-like environment, *Battle Chasers* stars four main characters that accidentally meet and team up for high adventure. There's Garrison (the greatest swordsman in the world, who's vowed never to use his sword again), Gully (a 9-year-old girl who'll be the muscle of the group), a powerful unnamed wizard who lugs a huge spellbook on his back, and a half-machine/half-golem creature that's a combination of technology and magic.

"It will be a very visual book, very cinematic and almost like 'Indiana Jones' in its action," says Madureira. "It'll be filled with adventure, insane villains and dizzying action sequences."

CRIMSON By Humberto Ramos

Set in New York City, *Crimson* revolves around the notion that before God created humans, he created beings without souls: vampires. One of the first was Lilith, an evil woman who began plotting the destruction of Heaven and Hell by turning humans into vampires. Enter Lilith's adversary Ekimus, an old vampire who can see the future. He finds a human named Alex Elder who holds the power to defeat Lilith, but only if he becomes a vampire himself. And, of course, he's reluctant about that.

"Alex has to become a vampire and is angry about it," says Ramos. "The story focuses on Alex, and his feelings and relationship to Ekimus."

TRIVIAL PURSUIT

101 LITTLE-KNOWN COMIC BOOK FACTS YOU CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT

BY the *Wizard* staff, Peter Sanderson, Bob Greenberger and Craig Shutt

DID you know that: Batman has a son? Spider-Man created Venom? Daredevil's origin also created the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles?

If not, don't be hard on yourself. Being a comic book information guru ain't easy these days and keeping on top of everything is one tall order. But don't fret, *Wizard* wants to keep you in the know. (We've got a rep to protect.) So we've compiled 101 little-known facts about the characters you all *thought* you knew and loved. So get comfy, put on your Reed Richards-style fanboy-retention helmet and let the discovery begin!

1 The First Marvel Mutant

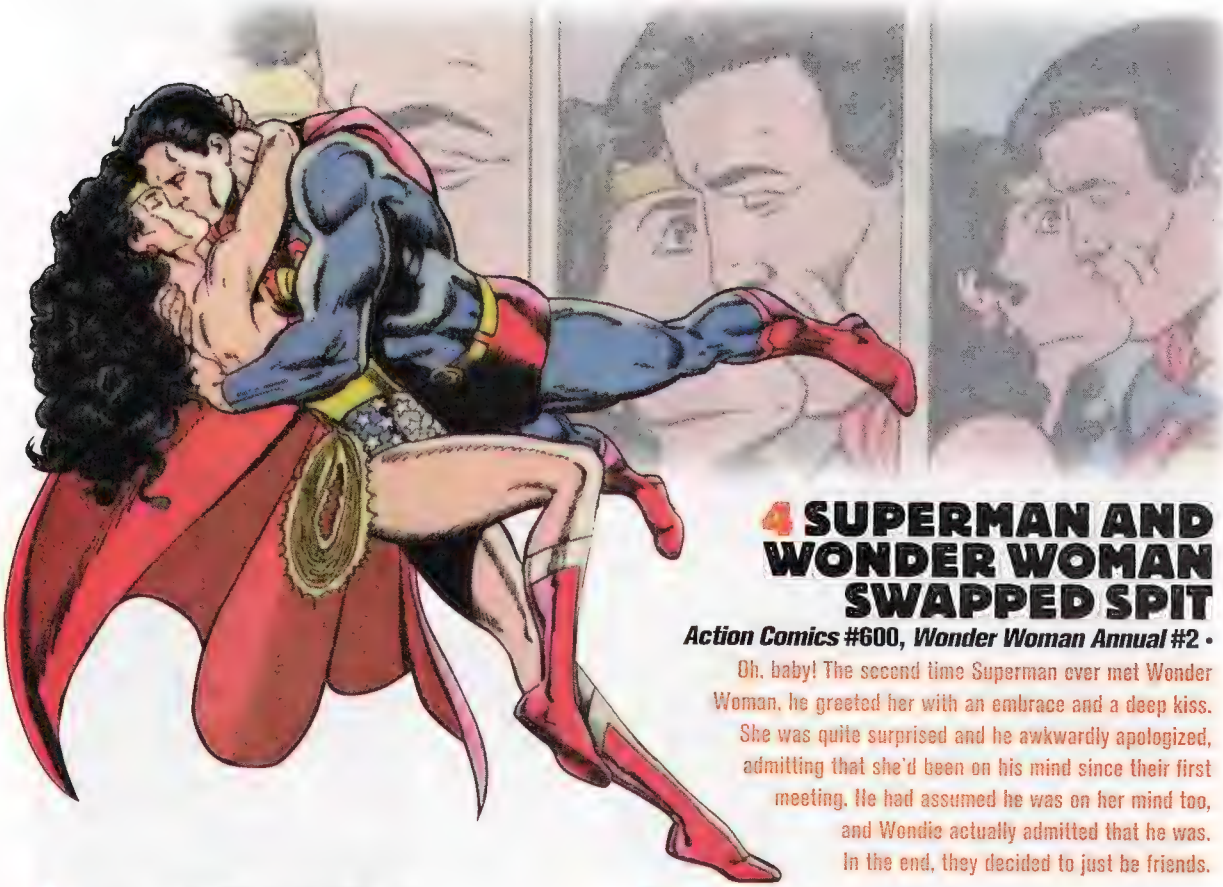
***Namor the Sub-Mariner* #1** • Prince Namor, the Sub-Mariner, is the son of an American sea captain and a water-breathing Atlantean princess. But the fact that he's a hybrid doesn't explain his vast strength or ability to fly. Yep, Namor has these powers 'cause he's a mutant, *not* because o' those li'l wings on his feet.

2 Prince of Sidekicks

***Hulk* #1, *Avengers* #1, *Captain America* #110, *Captain Marvel* #17** • Move over Robin and Kid Flash! Rick Jones spent his younger years playing the sidekick game. After hangin' out with the Hulk and the Avengers, he temporarily served as the new Bucky for Captain America and later acted as a human portal allowing Captain Mar-Vell to take his place on the Earthly plane. And get this, Rick even hung out with the spaceknight Rom! Groovy.

3 The Joker Killed Batgirl

***Batman: The Killing Joke, Suicide Squad* #23, #26** • When the Joker shot and crippled Barbara Gordon, the lunatic had no idea he was ending Batgirl's career. Permanently confined to a wheelchair, Barbara gave up her tights but not her crimefighting career. Instead, she bought tons of sophisticated computer equipment and set up shop as the research master Oracle.



4 SUPERMAN AND WONDER WOMAN SWAPPED SPIT

***Action Comics* #600, *Wonder Woman Annual* #2** • Oh, baby! The second time Superman ever met Wonder Woman, he greeted her with an embrace and a deep kiss. She was quite surprised and he awkwardly apologized, admitting that she'd been on his mind since their first meeting. He had assumed he was on her mind too, and Wondie actually admitted that he was. In the end, they decided to just be friends.

5 Teenage Mutant Ninja... Daredevil?

***Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (first series) #1** • Our pal Matt Murdock developed Daredevil's wacky super-senses after he was exposed to a radioactive canister as a child. In the spoof *TMNT* #1, that same canister also mutated four ordinary turtles into the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

6 I Said, "HAWKEYE IS PARTIALLY DEAF!"

***Hawkeye* #4 (limited series)** • To override the sonic mind-control device of the villain Crossfire, Hawkeye put the head of one of his sonic arrows in his mouth, drowning out the machine and enabling him to defeat the villain. Unfortunately, it cost the archer part of his hearing. He's since had to wear hearing aids in both ears.

7 If I Only Had a Heart...

***Tales of Suspense* #39** • When inventor Tony Stark tripped a booby trap during the Vietnam War, shrapnel lodged itself close to his heart. Captured by communists, Stark was forced to build them a powerful weapon, so he created a suit of armor that also contained a pacemaker to keep his heart going. He used the armor to escape and went on to become Iron Man. He's since had a heart transplant and now only dons his armor to fight crime.

8 Comics' Most Dysfunctional Family

***Avengers* #57-#58, *Avengers* #162** • Hank Pym (Giant Man/Ant-Man/Yellowjacket) accidentally created the evil robot Ultron. In turn, Ultron created the synthezoid Vision, as well as a mate, the female android Jocasta, based on Hank Pym's wife Janet Van Dyne (The Wasp).

9 Hulk Smash Sun!

***Incredible Hulk* #1** • Originally, Dr. Bruce Banner would change into the Hulk at sunset and return to human form at dawn. Since then, the circumstances behind Banner's metamorphoses have changed repeatedly–most often occurring whenever Banner gets really ticked off.

10 Iron Man's a Home Wrecker

***Avengers* #224** • After Henry Pym (Yellowjacket) suffered a nervous breakdown and ended up in prison, the Wasp left him. Obviously in need of attention, she began a relationship with Tony Stark. Thing is, she didn't know Stark was her fellow Avenger, Iron Man. Stark, however, eventually felt guilty enough about dating his friend's ex-wife, so he revealed his identity to the Wasp and they broke off their relationship.

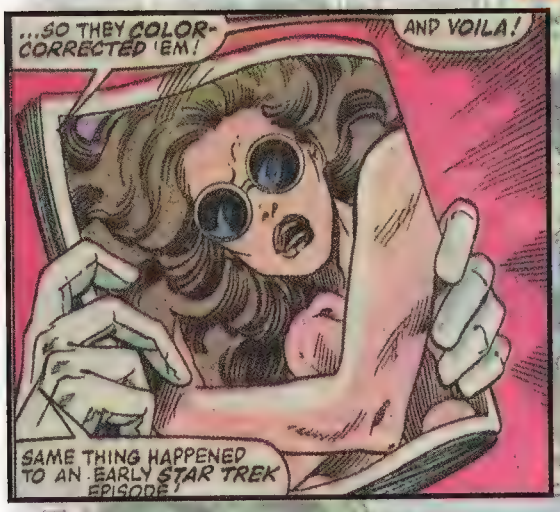
11 Porn Star, Heroin Addict... DD's Girlfriend?!?

***Daredevil* #227** • Karen Page, Daredevil's current gal-pal, once dumped him to pursue a career in film where she bombed, became a used-up porn star and sold DD's secret identity for a hit of heroin. That bit of info eventually made it into the Kingpin's hands and he used it to destroy Daredevil's life, which ol' hornhead has since put back together.

Karen Page–not a girl to take home to mom.

12 NAKED! XXX! ALL NUDE!

***Fantastic Four* #275** • T. J. Vance, publisher of the girlie magazine *The Naked Truth*, got his grubby paws on photos of She-Hulk sunbathing topless. But, strangely enough, when the pictures were published, no one recognized the green-skinned She-Hulk. That's 'cause Vance neglected to tell the printers the pics were of Shulkie. The printers thought the green skin was a mistake, so they changed her skin color to white.



13 Phoenix of a Different Color

***Fantastic Four* #286** • As the super-powerful Phoenix, the X-Men's Jean Grey killed billions of alien beings. But as it turns out, Phoenix wasn't even human. Instead, it was a sentient cosmic force that made itself look identical to Jean, while it kept the real Jean in suspended animation. Years after the Phoenix sacrificed itself to save the universe, the *real* Jean awoke and co-founded X-Factor with the four other original X-Men.

14 Prof. X is the Spider-Clone!?!

***Uncanny X-Men* #166** • When an alien Brood Queen implanted one of her eggs in Professor Xavier, it metamorphosed him into one of the Brood. Enter Moira MacTaggert and the Starjammers, who saved Xavier by transferring his mind into a new adult body cloned from his own.

15 Superman Has a Brother?

***Action Comics* #597** • While visiting the Kent's farm, Lois Lane accused Superman of being Clark Kent since their backgrounds were so similar. Being the sly old coots that they are, the Kents told Lois they'd also raised Kal-El, but done it secretly to avoid government interference. This infuriated Lois, who decided her Superman scoops had always been thrown her way with Clark's permission.

16 Mutant Homework

***X-Men* (first series) #1** • Not only did Professor Xavier teach the original X-Men how to use their bizarre mutant powers, he also gave them a high school and college education. That's cause Professor Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters was actually a fully accredited institution for learning. Wow, fun *and* educational!

17 Cap Drew His Own Comic

***Captain America* #311** • Before becoming Captain America, young Steve Rogers was an artist. For a short time as an adult, he worked as a comic book artist for Marvel Comics to help pay the bills. And even though no one there knew he was Cap, he actually got to draw the *Captain America* comic book!

18 Show Spidey the Money!

***Amazing Spider-Man* #200** • The burglar who broke into the Parker home and killed Peter Parker's Uncle Ben was in search of millions of dollars hidden there decades ago by a gangster. Ironically, silverfish and termites had destroyed the money *long* before the night of Ben's death.

19 Batman's Secret Identity Leaked

***Batman* #436, *Batman* #440-442, *New Titans* #60-#61** • On the day the Flying Graysons died and Dick Grayson began his journey to being the first Robin, young Tim Drake met the Haly Circus stars. Later, while watching footage of the new Robin in action, Tim recognized the quadruple somersault Dick had performed that fateful night and figured out his secret...and by summation, deduced that Bruce Wayne was Batman. Instead of squealing, he went on to become the third Robin.

20 Catwoman Was a Ho!

***Batman* #404** • Before becoming the voluptuous cat-burglar she is today, Selina Kyle actually walked the streets as a prostitute. But when she saw a news report about a bat-like vigilante prowling Gotham, she fashioned her own leather outfit and set out to challenge him. Becoming a master thief, she quickly left her street-walkin' days behind.

Selina makes a career decision.

21 Spider-Man: Poor Salesman

***Amazing Spider-Man* #18** • It finally dawned on Spider-Man that he could make a fortune by selling the formula for his incredibly strong webbing as a super-glue. Great plan, except when the interested company learned the "glue" dissolves after an hour, they gave ol' Web-head the boot.

22 Flash: Junk-Food Junkie!

***Flash* (second series) #1** • When Wally West first donned the mantle of the Flash, his top speed was 705 mph, and it wasn't easy to maintain. His metabolism burned fuel so quickly that he had to eat lots (and we mean LOTS) of high-calorie food after running. A typical snack consisted of five double cheeseburgers and four chocolate malts, and he carried candy bars with him to keep up his strength during a run.

23 Loki's Dad Was Really, Really Tall

***Journey into Mystery* #112** • Loki and Thor aren't blood relatives. Loki's actually the son of Laufey, king of the Frost Giants, who was so ashamed of his son's minuscule size, he kept Loki hidden. When Asgardian ruler Odin slew Laufey in battle, he adopted the infant Loki and raised him alongside his own son, Thor.

24 Avengers Doin' the Nasty

***Vision & Scarlet Witch* #1-#12 (limited series), *West Coast Avengers* #50-#52** • Like most married couples, the Vision and Scarlet Witch wanted to have kids. The problem? Well, the Vision just ain't human. But with the magic Wanda learned and her own mutant probability-altering powers, she and the Viz managed to produce two kids. But as it turns out, the "children" were only manifestations of magical energies belonging to the evil Master Pandemonium. Talk about your postpartum depression.

25 Supervillain Statutory Rape

***Tales of the Teen Titans* #44** • How do you make the perfect spy? That's easy. Take a cute earth-manipulating 16-year-old gal named Terra and plant her inside the Teen Titans. That's just what Deathstroke did in hopes of destroying the Titans from within. But while Terra rebuffed her teammate Changeling's advances, she'd sneak out to smoke cigarettes and do the nasty with Deathstroke. Hey, Deathstroke–two words: jail bait.

27 Bullseye's a Wolverine Clone?

***Daredevil* #199-#200** • After most of Bullseye's bones were shattered when he fell from a wire while fighting Daredevil, the Japanese scientist Lord Dark Wind replaced them with unbreakable adamantium.

28 Ugh...the New Universe Really Happened?

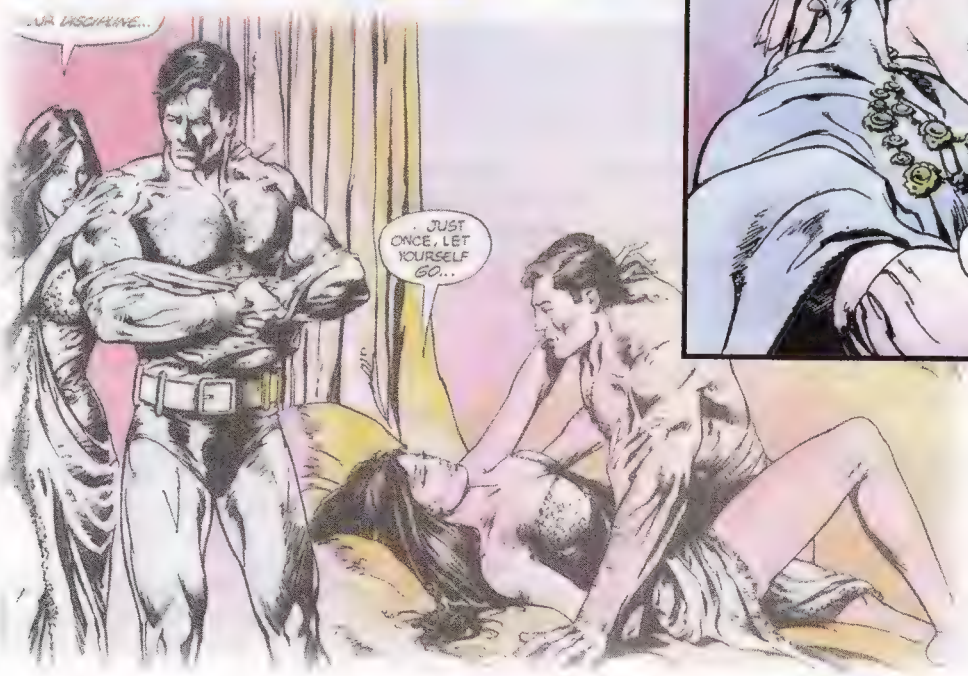
***Quasar* #31** • The space-faring Quasar is the only superhero from the Marvel Universe to have ever visited the New Universe (i.e., Marvel's failed second superhero universe, which lasted from 1986-1988). There, he obtained the immensely powerful Star Brand, which eventually transferred over to his girlfriend Kayla Ballantine, who now lives in the New Universe's Earth.

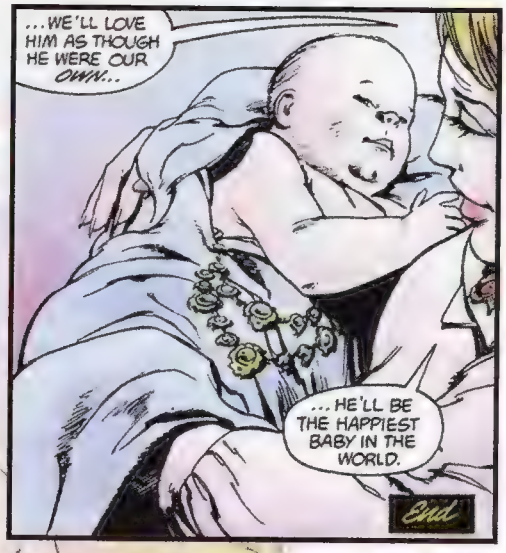
29 Null, But Not Void

***Quasar* #40-#43** • Marvel's cosmic hero Quasar is the only being to apparently survive the power of the insanely powerful weapon, the Ultimate Nullifier. After being wiped from existence, he managed to reconstruct his physical body, thanks to a major boost in power after acquiring the Star Brand from the New Universe.

26 BATMAN'S A DADDY!!!

***Batman: Son of the Demon* graphic novel** • When Batman helped his enemy Ra's al Ghul defeat an even greater enemy named Qayin, the Dark Knight finally gave in to his passion for Ghul's daughter Talia. Some nine months later (or the end of the book), a beautiful baby boy adorned in Talia's jewelry mysteriously appeared at an orphanage.





30 Hey, GL–Don't Quit Yer Day Job!

***Green Lantern* (second series) #49-#50, #53, #69, #100** • When Carol Ferris turned down Hal Jordan's (Green Lantern) marriage proposal and told him she'd agreed to marry another man, Jordan got pretty distraught. So, he gave up being a test pilot and took on a number of ordinary jobs, including tourist pilot in Idaho, insurance salesman for the Evergreen Insurance Co., a toy salesman with Merlin Toys and an independent truck operator.

31 Evil is as Evil Does

***Tales of Suspense* #52, #57, *X-Men* (first series) #4, *Avengers Annual* #10** • Hawkeye, Black Widow, Quicksilver, Scarlet Witch and Rogue all started off on the wrong side of the law. Clint Barton first became Hawkeye to prove he could be like Iron Man–but the archer fell in love with the Black Widow (a Russian spy at the time) and became one of Iron Man's enemies. As for Quicksilver and the Scarlet Witch, they started off as members of Magneto's terrorist Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, but eventually saw the light and joined the Avengers. Finally, Rogue began as a member of Mystique's Brotherhood of Evil Mutants, but ultimately joined the X-Men, seeking to control her powers.

35 One Villain, One Spy... One Vision?!?

***Avengers* #57-#58** • The evil robot Ultron initially created the synthezoid Vision with one goal in mind: to infiltrate and destroy the Avengers. Unfortunately, Ultron didn't predict that the Vision would rebel against him and *join* the Avengers instead.

36 Why Disco Died

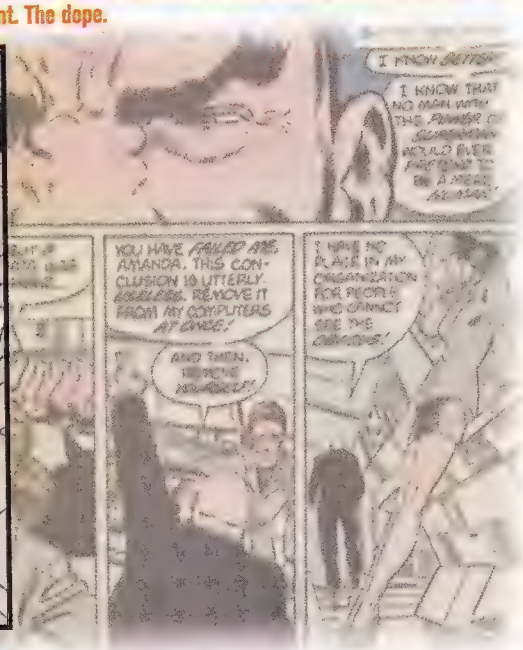
***X-Men* (first series) #130, *Dazzler* #1** • Early in her career, the mutant Dazzler tried making a career for herself as a disco diva, complete with a silver costume and roller skates. She later became an actress, a rock singer and even a member of the X-Men.

37 Present at the Big Bang

***Thor* #162, #168-#169, *Super-Villain Classics* #1** • The planet-eating Galactus was once an ordinary humanoid named Galan living on a planet in a universe existing before our own. In its dying days, the sentience of that universe contacted Galan (the last survivor of that cosmos), and convinced him to surrender himself to the universe. The universe's death throes helped spark the big bang that created our universe, and Galan was transformed into the planet-devourer Galactus.

32 CLARK KENT ISN'T SUPERMAN?

***Superman* (second series) #2** • After gathering substantial evidence, Lex Luthor's computer research team reached the inescapable conclusion that Clark Kent is Superman. But the obsessive, egotistical Luthor rejected the data simply because he thought no man with Superman's powers **would pretend to be a mere human like Kent. The dope.**



33 Even Superheroes Get Addicted

***Legends of the Dark Knight* #16-#20, *Green Lantern* #85** • After failing to save a girl from drowning, because he was too weak to move a block of cement, Batman willingly took a designer drug to increase his strength. It worked, but when he became addicted, Batman locked himself in the Batcave for a month until his body was cleansed. The drug was later refined into Venom, the juice that once pumped up the Bat-villain Bane. As for the original Green Arrow's ward Roy Harper (Speedy), the li'l guy fell in with druggies and soon became an addict. While Green Arrow and Green Lantern traced the drugs to their source, Black Canary helped Roy go cold turkey.

34 Batgirl: Crimefighter or Trick-or-Treater?

***Detective Comics* #359** • Librarian Barbara Gordon (daughter of police commissioner Jim Gordon), decided to change her image as a colorless female "brain" by wearing a tight-fitting "Batgirl" costume to the Policeman's Masquerade Ball. On the way, however, she stopped crooks from kidnapping millionaire Bruce Wayne. She held onto the costume in case she'd ever use it again, which she quickly did. It didn't take long before she was helping Batman and Robin with many of their cases.

38 Wonder Woman Had a Press Agent

***Wonder Woman* (second series) #7, *Wonder Woman Annual* #2** • Upon arriving on Man's World, Princess Diana hired p.r. hound Myndi Mayer as her publicist to explain her mission to bring peace. Mayer in return trademarked the "WW" symbol and produced Amazon bracelets as a fashion accessory for children. She also granted licenses to manufacturers to create Wonder Wear, licensed a comic book and helped create the Wonder Woman Foundation, a charitable organization.

39 "Ach, Walk This Way."

***Tales of Suspense* #66** • When he first met Adolf Hitler, young Johann Schmidt–the man who would become the Red Skull–was a mere bellboy. Hitler claimed that he could turn even this lowly bellboy into the ultimate Nazi. Apparently, he was right.

40 Cable is WHAT?

***Sandman* #24 (letters column), *The Dreaming* #22** • Before swappin' spit with Swamp Thing, Abby Arcane used to be married to Matthew Cable. However, when the unstable Matt got in a car crash, he made all sorts o' deals with the demonic Anton

Cover reproduction of ***Blade #1***.
Pencil and ink by Brian Hagan and Sandu Florea.
Inspired by ongoing series written by Don McGregor.
(February, 1998)

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Arcane before dying. Years later, Matt showed up as Matthew the Raven, servant of Morpheus the Sandman. He even expressed a fear of driving when he was stuck in a car with Sandman's sister Delirium.

41 Thor, God of Hardhats

***Thor* #341** • When Thor's pappy Odin altered Mjolnir so the Thunder God couldn't assume his mortal guise any more, Thor gave up his human identity of Dr. Donald Blake. Seeking aid from Nick Fury of S.H.I.E.L.D., Fury arranged a new cover identity for him: construction worker Sigurd Jarlson.

42 Dark Knight...Child Abuser?

***Batman* #408** • While fighting the Joker in the rain, Dick Grayson (Robin) was shot and slipped on a rope, getting hurt in the fall. Realizing he was endangering a boy's life, Batman refused to let Grayson return to being Robin. This led the media to think Robin was dead and demand charges be brought against Batman for child abuse. The Dark Knight refused to comment, figuring nobody'd believe him anyway.

43 Superheroes in the Slammer

***Avengers* #217-#230, *Green Lantern: Emerald Dawn* #6 (limited series), *Green Lantern: Emerald Dawn II* #1-#6 (limited series), *New Warriors* #26-#42** • Yep, even superheroes ain't above the law! Henry Pym (Yellowjacket) was sent to the jailhouse for helping to steal a supply of adamantium, but eventually was found innocent when it was revealed he'd been set up by Egghead. Green Lantern (Hal Jordan) served a prison sentence for killing a man while driving drunk. And Marvel Boy (a.k.a. Justice), served a prison term for accidentally killing his abusive father..

44 Animal House, Marvel-style

***Fantastic Four Annual* #2** • Before the FF and Doctor Doom even existed, Reed Richards, Ben Grimm and Victor Von Doom all attended the same college. When Von Doom contemptuously declined to be Reed's roommate, Ben accepted instead, creating a strong bond between the future Mr. Fantastic and the Thing.

45 Lobo Has Been, ah, "Fixed"

***L.E.G.I.O.N. '89* #7** • That ruthless bastich Lobo could replicate new beings of himself if his blood was ever spilled. Needing help in freeing some people, Legionnaire Vril Dox had Lobo drink a special concoction, replicate a few squadrons of himself and then swing into action. Unknown to Lobo, the potion changed his cellular structure so he could no longer "breed."

46 Never Trust a Blind Guy

***Daredevil* #25** • Matt Murdock once persuaded his friends Foggy Nelson and Karen Page that he wasn't Daredevil by pretending that DD was really his own fictional twin brother, Mike Murdock. Today, both Karen and Foggy know that Daredevil's really always been Matt.

47 Firestorm Had Leukemia

***Extreme Justice* #0-#5** • Ronnie Raymond and Martin Stein made up Firestorm. But when events caused them to split, Stein became a Fire Elemental, while Ronnie's human body paid the price as he contracted leukemia. While undergoing radical chemotherapy, his meta-gene was activated and this transformed him once more into Firestorm. This called back Stein, who wanted to reabsorb Ronnie, making Firestorm whole again. But Ronnie didn't want it, so Stein used his power to molecularly reform Ronnie's body, rewriting the codes and leaving him disease-free.

48 SUPERHERO SEX CHANGES

***Captain America* #390-#391, *Alpha Flight* #45, *Lobo's Back* #1-#4 (limited series) *Justice League Task Force* #7-#8** • When his original body was killed, the spirit of Alpha Flight's Sasquatch migrated into the dead body of heroine Snowbird; but when he reverted back to human form, he became a woman! Lobo and the Martian Manhunter have also transformed into females–Lobo when he was reincarnated after pissing off the angel Duffiel, and the Manhunter when he went undercover on an island of Amazons. Even Captain America was nearly turned into a woman by the evil Superia, who wanted to rule the world with her female army.

Cover reproduction of ***Thunderbolts #12***.
Pencil and ink art by Mark Bagley and Vince Russell.
Inspired by 48-page epic written by Kurt Busiek.
(January, 1998)

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49 BATARANG, BAT-SHARK-REPELLENT...BAT-GUN?!?!

***Detective Comics* #29, *Detective Comics* #575-#578** • In his early adventures, Batman actually used guns. In one instance, he disarmed a common criminal and then held the gun on him to force information about his employer, Doctor Death. Nowadays, Batman loathes guns, seeing as how his parents were gunned down by one.

50 Hawkeye: Marksman or Murderer?

***Avengers* #229** • With his blaster pointed at an unknowing Henry Pym, Egghead pulled the trigger just as Hawkeye fired an arrow directly into the gun's barrel. The gun backfired, killing the master criminal. An Avengers inquiry, however, found Hawkeye innocent of murder.

51 Doomsday: First Son of Krypton

***Superman/Doomsday: Hunter/Prey* #3 (limited series)** • Countless years ago, a group of humanoids genetically engineered a new lifeform that could tame the inhospitable world of Krypton. When they sent the infant out into the environment, the planet's predators and atmosphere killed it instantly, but they used the remains to make the next clone stronger and more adaptable. The sick cycle continued for some 30 years, when the creature finally succeeded in surviving in the atmosphere and killing all the threatening lifeforms, including its creators! This killing machine traveled the universe, eventually making its way to Earth where it "killed" Superman.

52 Batman Can Kill Superman

***Superman* (second series) #44, *Adventures of Superman* #467, *Action Comics* #654** • Lex Luthor's Kryptonite ring was discovered missing and eventually found its way into Batman's hands. When Batman told Superman that he had it, the Man of Steel told Batman to keep it, just in case a foe ever took control of Superman. "I want the means to stop me," Superman said, "to be in the hands of a man I can trust with my life."

53 World's Smartest Janitor

***Tales to Astonish* #63** • Originally, the Hulk's archenemy the Leader was just plain old Sam Sterns, a janitor of average intelligence. However, after he was accidentally exposed to gamma rays, his skin turned green and his brain grew to an enormous size, giving him superhuman intelligence.

54 Real Animal Men

***Captain America* #405, *Thor* #363** • The sorcerer Dredmund Druid and the scientist Dr. Nightshade transformed Captain America into a werewolf nicknamed "Cap-Wolf." On the amphibious side, one of Loki's nastiest tricks was turning his foster brother Thor into a frog! But using his magic hammer Mjolnir, Thor transformed himself into a super-powered frog and ultimately forced Loki to restore his true form.

55 Lockjaw... an Inhuman's Best Friend

***The Thing* #3** • Now *here's* a depressing and repulsive fact. Lockjaw, the big teleportin' doggie that hangs out with Black Bolt and the rest of the Inhumans really isn't a big dog. Uh-uh. He's really an Inhuman who was so horribly disfigured he can't even speak. Ugh.

56 Dying To Live

***Fantastic Four Annual* #5, *Fantastic Four* #267, *Incredible Hulk* #372** • The Invisible Woman nearly died giving birth to her son Franklin. Even worse, her second child was stillborn. As for Bruce Banner's wife Betty, she also suffered a miscarriage. It was theorized that the radiation that gave the Hulk and the Fantastic Four their powers also affected their ability to have children.

57 Web-Slinger Will Work For Food

***Avengers* #236-#237** • With his gal-pal the Black Cat laid up in the hospital, Spidey really needed some extra cash, so he offered his services to the Avengers–that way he'd finally get some respect *and* a $1,000-a-week stipend! After reluctantly letting Spidey help the team on a mission, the Avengers decided to let him join, but the government considered Web-head a security risk.

58 Million Dollar Man

***Flash* (second series) #1, #14, #56-#58** • Wally West's (the Flash) money woes were solved when he won the lottery and moved into a huge mansion. But the poor schnook did some heavy investments and quickly went bankrupt when the stock market collapsed. He now lives off a stipend from the Barry Allen Foundation, which is funded by the Icicle's fortune. (In the Icicle's will, he bequeathed half his fortune to whoever happened to be the Flash at the time of his death.)

Cover reproduction of ***Uncanny X-Men #353***.
Pencil and ink art by Chris Bachalo and Tim Townsend.
Inspired by story written by Steven T. Seagle.
(January, 1998)

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59 Even Superheroes Get Sick

***The Death of Captain Marvel* graphic novel** • Though Marvel's space hero Captain Marvel survived plenty of brawls with the powerful villain Thanos, he eventually succumbed to the one foe he couldn't beat: cancer. Mar-Vell's body became ravaged with the disease after Nitro used a carcinogenic gas on him.

60 Blood Brothers on Bikes

***Ghost Rider* (second series) #43** • Ah, brotherly love. After Johnny Blaze, the original Ghost Rider, kicked his "demon" habit, he spent his days hunting down the new Ghost Rider, a demon-possessing teenager named Danny Ketch. As luck would have it, Blaze and Ketch actually became allies for quite some time before they discovered that they were also brothers, separated at birth.

61 Do Superheroes Have Health Insurance?

***Flash* (second series) #1** • Due to a severe storm, St. Mary's Children Hospital in Manhattan asked Flash to deliver a heart to a transplant patient in Seattle. Flash agreed, but pointed out that the hospitals on both ends were being paid big bucks for the organ and operation. Concerned that his health was deteriorating, Flash got the hospitals to give him medical coverage in return for his being on call whenever they needed him.

62 Everybody Run! Cap's Got a Gun!

***Captain America* #321** • After WWII, Cap pledged to do his best to preserve life whenever possible. Unfortunately, when battling the terrorist agents of ULTIMATUM, one member opened fire on a crowd. Knowing more innocents would die before Cap could reach the terrorist, the Star-Spangled Avenger was forced to blow the murderer away with an Uzi!

63 Superman: Porno Star

***Action Comics* #592-#593** • Sleez, a former Darkseid toady exiled to Earth, captured Big Barda and overwhelmed her with his mind-control power. Superman soon intervened, but was also caught. Then–get this–Sleez took 'em both to the owner of the sleazy Grossman Pictures, and they were soon sitting on a bed making out for the cameras. Fortunately for the two heroes, Mr. Miracle intervened before any clothes came off.

64 Aquaman IS a Bastard!

***Atlantis Chronicles* #7 (limited series)** • When Aquaman's mommy, Queen Atlanna, was unable to conceive a child with her husband King Trevis, the people grew restless awaiting an heir. One night, Atlanna dreamed the wizard Atlan came to her and promised her a son if she'd come to him freely. She agreed and soon was pregnant. The child was born with blonde hair (marking an ancient Atlantean curse), leading Trevis to commit suicide and the child to be abandoned. Rescued and raised by dolphins, their son grew up to become Aquaman.

65 Sweatin' to the Oldies

***Marvel Spotlight* #31** • Nick Fury, the late director of the law enforcement agency S.H.I.E.L.D., was a big-time war hero back in WWII, leading his team of Howling Commandos. On a mission in France, he was under the emergency care of Prof. Sternberg who injected the hero with the Infinity Formula. Fury remained youthful and healthy some 50 years later, thanks to annual doses of the serum.

66 It's Wrasslin' Time!

***The Thing* #28-#36** • After temporarily quitting the Fantastic Four, the Thing turned to the only other useful job he could: professional wrestling! But being a superpowered wrestler just wouldn't be fair to the plain ol' human wrestlers, so the Thing joined the Unlimited Class Wrestling Federation, which only employed wrestlers with superhuman strength.

67 Double-O Parker

***Amazing Spider-Man Annual* #4** • Spider-Man isn't the only hero in his family. Y'see, Peter Parker's parents, Richard and Mary, were government agents who disappeared on a secret mission in North Africa. Unfortunately, a Communist spy who was impersonating the Red Skull learned they were double agents and had them killed.

68 The Atomic Chair

***Justice League of America* #14 (first series)** • At the Atom's very first JLA meeting, the members presented him with a small chair similar to theirs. The poor guy was a bit disheartened by its size, though, since he wouldn't be at eye level to his teammates. But he quickly found that by pushing a button in the arm (and thanks to magnetic plates in the floor and ceiling), the chair floated in the air about head high with the others.

69 ROBIN'S A MURDERER?

***Batman* #424-#425** • When Jason Todd (the second Robin) rushed to protect Gloria Stanson from her abusive ex-boyfriend Felipe Garzonas (an ambassador's son with diplomatic immunity), he was too late: Gloria had already hanged herself rather than submit to Felipe's cruelty. Enraged, Robin tracked Felipe to the top of his apartment building. Batman arrived on the scene just in time to see Felipe plummet to his death. When Batman demanded to know if Robin pushed him off the ledge, Robin looked away and said Felipe "slipped."

WANTED

DEAD OR ALIVE

PREFERABLY DEAD

THE SPIDERHUNT IS ON!

Sensational Spider-Man #25
Peter Parker, Spider-Man #89

Amazing Spider-Man #432
Spectacular Spider-Man #255

JANUARY

MARVEL COMICS
BELIEVE IN THE IMPOSSIBLE

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70 Supergirl is Lana Lang?

***Superman* (second series) #19** • When a disoriented red-haired woman in a Superman outfit showed up in the arctic, something led her to Smallville. Turns out she's a protomatter replica of Lana Lang from a "pocket universe," created by *that* world's hero, Lex Luthor. Her role there was to help protect the last remaining humans from three ultra-violent Kryptonians who 1) had survived their planet's destruction through another dimension called the Phantom Zone, and 2) were more powerful than Superman. Supergirl was sent to "our" Earth to bring Superman back for help. In battle, she was reduced to a protoplasmic lump, but Superman returned her to "our" Smallville where the Kents nursed her back to health. To honor her protector, she became Supergirl.

76 Turnin' Down the JLA

***Legends* #6 (limited series), *Justice League International* 22-24, *Superman: The Man of Steel Annual* #4** • Seems the JLA really needed to work on its membership drive skills. After working with each of the original five JLA members (Aquaman, Black Canary, Flash, Green Lantern and Martian Manhunter), Superman was invited to join the team. He declined, saying he didn't have the time. As for the lovely and talented Wonder Woman, her first contact with other superhumans came while she was helping defeat G. Gordon Godfrey, a scumbag who was turning the world against superheroes. They invited her to join the newly formed JLA, but she turned 'em down because her mission in Man's World wasn't supposed to focus on punching and hitting.

71 SUPERMAN: JUDGE, JURY & EXECUTIONER!

***Superman* (second series) #22** • When Superman traveled to the "pocket universe," he found three Phantom Zone Kryptonians villains had decimated the world and practically all of the human race, reducing it to a vast wasteland. Superman, called in from "our" dimension, realized he couldn't beat three people who were more powerful as him, so he found a reserve of that world's green Kryptonite (which he was immune to because it had different properties than "our" world's Kryptonite) and exposed the three to its lethal glow, killing them.

72 Superman Goes Nuts!

***Adventures of Superman* #446** • Overcome with remorse for killing three Phantom Zone criminals from another dimension, Superman's mind went wonky. Dozing, Clark Kent "sleepwalked," donned the identity of Gangbuster and fought crime in Metropolis' Suicide Slum. But he really started losing his marbles when he began switching to Gangbuster while he was awake, *without ever realizing it.* Ultimately, the Guardian revealed Gangbuster to be Superman and the Man o' Steel took a much-needed vacation in space.

73 The Girl Next Door

***Spider-Man: Parallel Lives* graphic novel** • Years ago, Mary Jane Watson was visiting her Aunt Anna when their next door neighbor Ben Parker was murdered. Seeing Spider-Man leave the Parkers' house, Mary Jane deduced that Peter Parker was Spider-Man.

74 Give Lex a Hand

***Action Comics* #600** • Fashioning a piece of Kryptonite into a ring, Lex Luthor wore the ring to protect himself from Superman. However, over time, the radiation from the ring crept into his bone structure causing unrelenting pain. Doctors were forced to amputate his hand and replace it with a high-tech metal one.

75 She's a (Nympho) Maniac

***Tales of Suspense* #52, *Tales of Suspense* #57, *Daredevil* #86** • Over the years, sexy superheroine Black Widow's been romantically involved with Hawkeye and Daredevil. She's even had a flirtatious relationship with Tony Stark (Iron Man), as well as Hercules back when they were members of The Champions.

77 The Beast Blue it

***Amazing Adventures* #11** • Oh, my stars and garters! The fun-lovin' blue-furred X-Man the Beast wasn't always warm and fuzzy. Originally, he looked like a normal human being except for his unusually large hands and feet. But after Hank McCoy, a renowned geneticist, drank a chemical that further mutated him, he was covered with gray fur that later turned blue.

78 My Sister, My Mom

***Daredevil* #229** • For most of his life, Matt Murdock (a.k.a. Daredevil) believed his mother was dead. After all, that's what his late father had told him. But when Matt's life had been completely shattered by the Kingpin, he found his way to a church to recover. There, he was reunited with his mother, now a nun known as Sister Maggie.

79 Swamp Thing's a Drug Dealer

***Hellblazer* #63** • At John Constantine's 40th birthday party, Swamp Thing made a brief appearance, giving his old "friend" an interesting birthday gift–he used his powers to turn a small marijuana plant into an enormous one.

80 Wonder Woman Worked at Taco Whiz

***Wonder Woman* (second series) #73** • Trapped on Man's World with no home and no dough, Wonder Woman tried applying for a job in Boston only to be turned down just about everywhere. She eventually accepted a counter job at the local Taco Whiz, but ultimately moved on to become a private eye, as well as working in Gateway City's Museum of Antiquities.

Cover reproduction of ***X-Men: The Manga #1***.
Pencil and ink art by various Japanese Manga Artists.
Inspired by ongoing b&w Marvel Imports series by various writers.
(January, 1998)

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81 Superhero Suicide

***Sandman* (second series) #20** • Alone and seriously depressed, Element Girl just wanted to end her life but she didn't know how. She couldn't slash her wrists: no blood. Couldn't poison herself, her body processed toxins. But after a brief chat with Death, Element Girl prayed to the sun god Ra asking to be released from her special nature. He granted the request, and her form calcified and crumbled to dust.

82 Wonder Woman Hung With the Flintstones?

***Wonder Woman* (second series) #1** • Some 30,000 years ago, the souls of women who died at men's hands gathered in a swirling mass. The Olympus goddesses used these souls to inhabit new lifeforms called Amazons. When Queen Hippolyta learned her original body was pregnant at the time she was killed by her caveman husband centuries ago, she formed a child from the shore's clay and the goddess Artemis gave this figure life. Named Diana, the child grew up with the Amazons and earned her place as their champion Wonder Woman.

83 The One True Green Lantern?

***Green Lantern* (first series) #59** • Gym teacher Guy Gardner was actually the first choice as a suitable replacement Green Lantern to the dying GL Abin Sur, whose ship was hurtling towards Earth. However, after Sur crashed on Earth, time was running out and Hal Jordan just happened to be closer, so Jordan became Earth's Green Lantern instead.

84 Cap's a Poor Role Model

***Savage Tales* #1** • Scientist Ted Sallis created a serum aimed at surviving biochemical warfare. It worked, but turned its subjects into monsters. Later, while trying to recreate the Super-Soldier formula that turned Steve Rogers into Captain America, Sallis modified his original formula. When A.I.M. tried stealing his formula, Sallis injected himself with the only sample and ran to the swamps. Unfortunately, his formula turned him into the monstrous, nearly mindless Man-Thing. Oops.

85 Eclipso Was The First Spectre

***Eclipso* #18** • The villain Eclipso was apparently God's first Spirit of Vengeance who took things further than was intended. He was subsequently banished, and a new Wrath of God was created to fulfill Heaven's wishes, namely the Spectre.

86 Wedding Bells

***Fantastic Four Annual* #3** • You thought the original Brady Bunch wedding was wacky, that's nuthin' compared to Mister Fantastic and the Invisible Girl's wedding which was plagued by innumerable party crashers thanks to Doctor Doom and his army of supervillains. And it actually took S.H.I.E.L.D. agents to throw out two uninvited intruders named Stan Lee and Jack Kirby!

87 "J" Stands For "Jerk"

Ever wonder just what the heck the "J." in *Daily Bugle* publisher J. Jonah Jameson stands for? Wonder no more, cause it stands for, um, "J." According to Spider-Man Group Editor Ralph Macchio, it never really stood for anything, and it never will.

88 The Falcon's a Stinkin' Mutie?

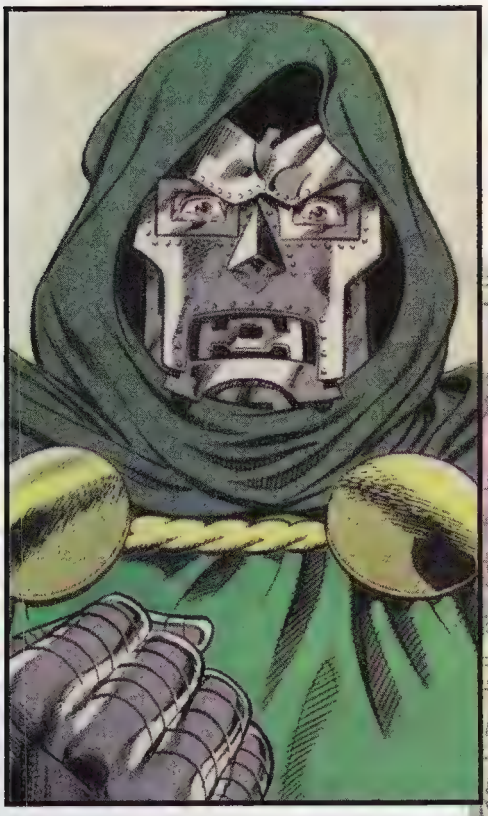
***Falcon* #1-#4 (limited series)** • The Falcon's ability to make his falcon Redwing understand his commands was a mystery for years. Eventually it was revealed that the Cosmic Cube helped strengthen the bond between the two into a more-permanent mental link, and still later, Professor X theorized that the Falcon was a mutant who could communicate with birds telepathically.

89 Mxyzptlk is Impossible

***Superman* (second series) #50** • During the whole "Red Kryptonite Krisis," while readers learned that Lex Luthor got a hunk of red Kryptonite from Mxyzptlk, they also discovered that Mxy doesn't just bother Superman, he actually bothers the Marvel Universe as the Impossible Man! Garbed in purple and green, he's shown fighting a team that's a dead ringer for the Fantastic Four.

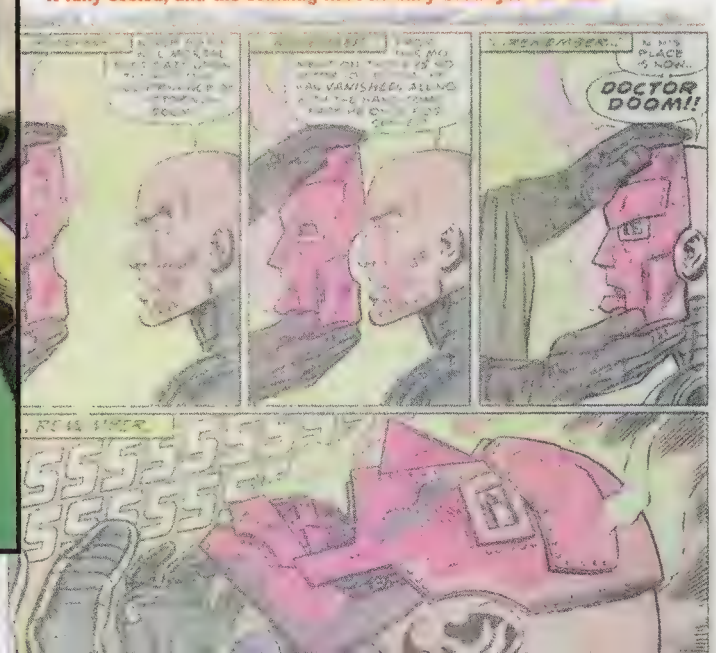
90 Never Trust a Butler or a Mascot

***Avengers* #54, *Justice League of America* (first series)#77** • Needing money for his mother's expensive medical treatments, the Avengers' trustworthy butler Jarvis gave the mansion's floor plans to the Masters of Evil, figuring the Avengers would defeat them anyway (which they did). He confessed and the Avengers agreed to give him another chance. As for the Justice League of America, their mascot Snapper Carr was persuaded by "John Dough" (the Joker in disguise) to reveal the location of the JLA's secret headquarters to Dough. The JLA consequently had to move into their satellite, and Snapper resigned in disgrace.



91 DOCTOR DOOM: PLASTIC SURGEON

***Fantastic Four* #278** • Check this out: Doctor Doom does not wear a mask because his face was horribly scarred in a school accident. Actually, the explosion only left a slight scar, but the vain Doom thought his face had been completely ruined. So, he ran off to Tibet where some monks helped him create his trademark mask. The impatient Doom put the mask on before it fully cooled, and the scalding heat actually destroyed his face!



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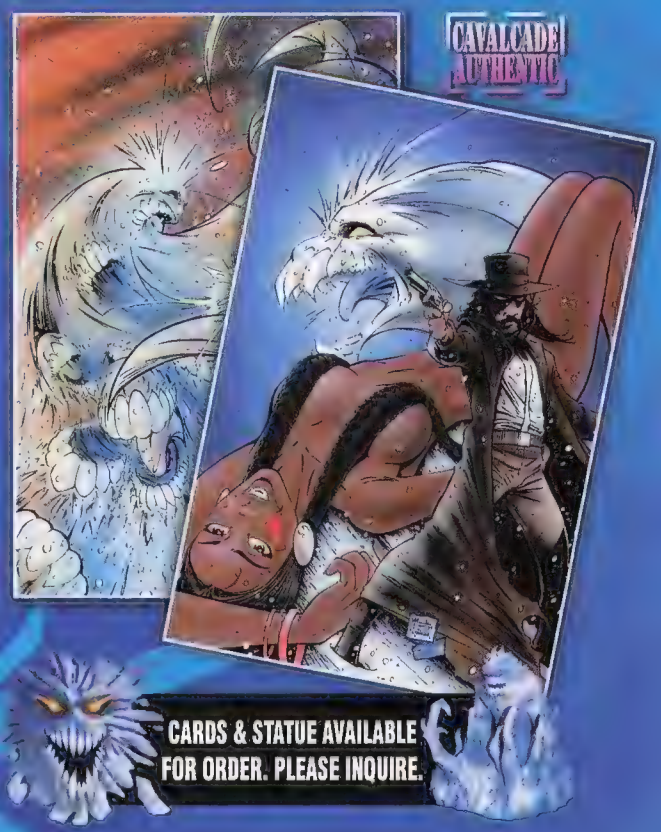

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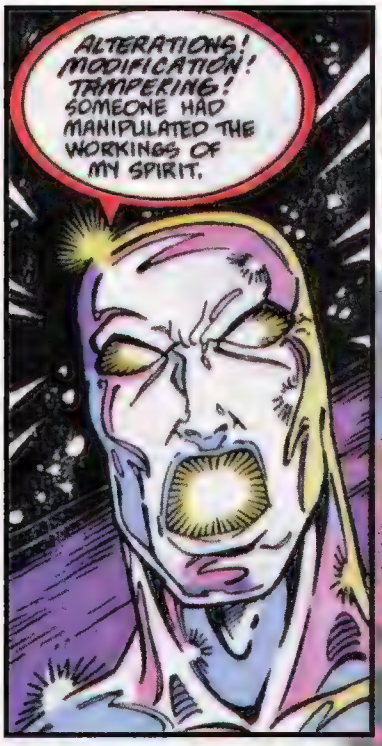


92 GALACTUS MADE ME DO IT!

***Silver Surfer* (second series) #48**

Norrin Radd was an all-around nice guy...until Galactus showed up. To save his planet Zenn-La, Radd agreed to serve as Galactus' herald, the Silver Surfer. But Galactus altered the Surfer's very soul so the Surfer wouldn't have doubts about finding inhabited planets for Galactus to destroy. Years after the Surfer left Galactus' servitude, he demanded his original spirit back. Galactus obliged, and the Surfer was completely overwhelmed by guilt over the countless deaths he helped cause.

TV'S TOP 10 (or not) SUPERHEROES

10. "ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN" (1953-1957): George Reeves played the big guy in the classic "Adventures of Superman" series, while Dean Cain later took up the role in the abysmal "Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman" (1993-1997).

9. "BATMAN" (1966-1968) Adam West and Burt Ward really hammed it up as the campy Batman and Robin.

8. "WONDER WOMAN" (1976-1979) The luscious Lynda Carter mesmerized fans with her magic lasso.

7. "SPIDER-MAN" (1977): Nicholas Hammond played everybody's favorite web-slinger in a number of cheesy TV movies.

6. "THE INCREDIBLE HULK" (1977-1982) Lou Ferrigno starred as the Green Goliath, while Bill Bixby brought "David" Banner to life. A few made-for-TV movies included "The Incredible Hulk Returns" (1988) which featured a way-out-of-character Thor, followed by "The Trial of the Incredible Hulk" (1989), guest starring Daredevil in an all-black costume with no eye holes.

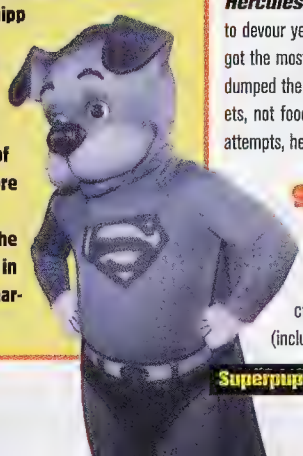
5. "SWAMP THING" (1990-1992) Dick Durock brought the muck-encrusted mockery of a man to life in this horroresque series.

4. "CAPTAIN AMERICA" (1979) Reb Brown starred as Captain America in two super-cheesy made-for-TV movies. Instead of a mask, he wore a blue motorcycle helmet, and carried a mostly clear shield.

3. "THE FLASH" (1990-1991) John Wesley Shipp played the Scarlet Speedster Barry Allen in a rather lackluster show, although Mark Hamill did a noteworthy job as the Trickster.

2. "DR. STRANGE" (1978) This snore of a TV movie featured Peter Hooten as the Master of Mystic Arts in a snazzy suit, which he only wore in the last few minutes!

1. "SUPERPUP" (1958) This pilot, shot using the Superman TV show's sets, used talking dogs in the lead roles who were actually midgets wearing fiberglass heads. No joke. ■ *Craig Shutt*



Superpup—Bad dog!

93 The Batmobile Needs 'The Club'

***Batman* #408** • While visiting Crime Alley, Batman returned to the Batmobile only to find two tires missing. Amused, he confronted the young thief when he returned for the other two, but the kid ran off. Batman followed and learned his name was Jason Todd, whose father had run off and his mother was dead, leaving Jason on his own. Batman took him under his wing, and Jason went on to become the second Robin.

94 A Super Secret

***Superman: The Man of Steel Annual* #4** • Superman and Green Lantern first met while preventing an orbiting satellite from falling to Earth. After introducing themselves, Superman admitted he didn't know where he was from, so GL secretly used his ring to learn that Superman was the last survivor of Krypton. He decided not to tell Supes such sad news, though, and instead the Man of Steel discovered that info on his own.

95 A Furious Eye

***Sgt. Fury and his Howling Commandos* #27** • So how'd Nick Fury lose his eye? Well, back in the Nazi-fightin' days of WWII, Sgt. Fury caught a live grenade in his bare hands. He tossed it back, but the grenade exploded as Fury let go of it, lodging a piece of shrapnel in his eye. The doctors could repair his eye, but the operation would've kept Fury out of action for about a year. So Fury refused, and instead his vision gradually deteriorated to the point where his left eye was useless.

96 A Tall Cool One

***Hercules* #4 (limited series)** • In a distant alternate future, Galactus was about to devour yet another planet, when Olympian prankster Hercules had a brilliant idea. He got the most potent alcohol in the entire universe, requested counsel with Galactus, and dumped the hooch in the big guy's drink. Since Galactus subsists on the energy of planets, not food and drink, he didn't even get tipsy. But since he was amused by Herc's attempts, he spared the planet.

97 Don't Yield, Back Shields

***Captain America Comics* #1, *Captain America* #255** • Back in his early days, Captain America actually carried around a triangular shield. It wasn't until later on when President Franklin Roosevelt gave Cap his current round shield, which is composed of a unique combination of alloys (including adamantium) making it virtually indestructible.

98 The REAL Star-Spangled Kid

***Captain America* #355-#357** • Sersi the Eternal once used her powers to turn Captain America into a teenager so he could infiltrate a camp of children run by his old enemies, the Sisters of Sin. The spell only lasted some 48 hours, just enough time for "Teen Cap" to revert to his powerful self and take down the entire camp.

99 The Perfect Superhero

***Sensation Comics* #1** • People become superheroes for a number of reasons, but only Terry Sloane did it as an alternative to suicide. This guy was so perfect at everything that he found life boring as hell. He was so depressed he was actually about to kill himself when he saw a young woman with similar ideas jump off the bridge. He saved her and soon decided to become the Golden Age costumed do-gooder Mister Terrific.

100 Cyclops is Broken

***X-Men* (first series) #114** • Everyone knows the X-Men's Cyclops is a mutant who can't control his optic blasts. While escaping a burning plane as a young boy, Scott and his brother Alex shared a single parachute. Unfortunately, it didn't slow their descent enough to keep Scott from suffering a head injury that damaged the part of his brain enabling him to control his superpower.

101 SPIDEY WAS THE FIRST VENOM

***Secret Wars* #8 (limited series), *Amazing Spider-Man* #252**

The alien symbiote that makes up Venom originally popped up as the black costume Spider-Man found on another planet during the "Secret Wars." After the wall-crawler discovered his costume was actually alive and trying to control him, Spidey broke his psychic bond with it. The suit found a new, more accepting host in Eddie Brock and together the two became Venom. W

While researching this article, the Wizard staff, Peter Sanderson, Bob Greenberger and Craig Shutt went through 614 sacks of White Castles, 42 bottles of Advil, 1,600 gallons of water and 95 colostomy bags. But heck, it was all worth it!

TOP 10 COMIC-BOOK-FRIENDLY SONGS

BATMAN "Acid Batman" by Malachi Crunch from *I Hate the Itching*

CAPTAIN AMERICA "Paradise City" by Guns 'N' Roses from *Appetite for Destruction*

EGO, THE LIVING PLANET "Ego, the Living Planet" by Monster Magnet from *Dopes to Infinity*

KITTY PRYDE, NIGHTCRAWLER "In the Garage" by Weezer from *Weezer*

MAGNETO, TITANIUM MAN, CRIMSON DYNAMO "Magneto and Titanium Man" by Paul McCartney & Wings from *Venus and Mars*

NEIL GAIMAN, SANDMAN (the Dream King) "Tear in Your Hand" by Tori Amos from *Little Earthquakes*

SUPERMAN, GREEN LANTERN "Sunshine Superman" by Donovan from *Sunshine Superman*

SUPERMAN, JIMMY OLSEN, LOIS LANE "Jimmy Olsen Blues" by The Spin Doctors from *Pocket Full of Kryptonite*

SUPERMAN, SOLOMON GRUNDY "Superman's Song" by Crash Test Dummies from *The Ghosts that Haunt Me*

WOLVERINE "WOLVERINE BLUES" by Entombed from "Wolverine Blues" ■ *Craig Shutt*

TOP 10 COOLEST CREATOR FACTS

10. While putting himself through college, Mark Waid had a lounge act and worked as an actor.
9. Writer Neil Gaiman once wrote a biography of the pop group Duran Duran.
8. Before he got into comics, *Batman* writer Doug Moench wrote captions for the men's magazine *Fling*.
7. Adam Kubert once appeared on the TV game show "What's My Line?"
6. *Savage Dragon* creator Erik Larson drew the covers for the Oakland A's baseball game programs in 1990.
5. Silver Age artist Jim Steranko, whose previous careers included carnival barker, magician and escape artist, was the inspiration for Jack Kirby's Mister Miracle.
4. Bill Sienkiewicz's full name is Boleslaw Felix Robert Sienkiewicz. (And you thought his *last name* was tough!)
3. Alex Ross owns a 1950 Studebaker that he can turn into a replica of the 1950s Batmobile by adding several parts, including a bat head on the hood and a fin on the top.
2. Frank Miller didn't want to use the yellow oval around Batman's insignia in *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*, but DC executives insisted. So in issue 2, he had Batman's costume get shredded in a fight. When Batman returned, the oval was gone.
1. At one time, *Catwoman* artist Jim Balent was a grave digger. ■ *Craig Shutt*

Marvel Comics and Legends in 3 Dimensions Present...

The "Splash Page... TINGLING!" Art Contest

SPLASH PAGE

And it's PANDEMONIUM! As we join the action, SPIDEY is leaping, twisting and dodging across several rooftops as he's being shot at, and various weapons are being thrown at him (bola, spear, I dunno...). The LUNATICS are out and they want that BOUNTY! Every HUNTER from here to Hillsborough is out in force, each one believing that he's got what it takes to take SPIDEY down! Some are dressed in street clothes, some in hunting outfits, and others still have fashioned cheesy-looking costumes for their big hunt in the city!

(NOTE TO ARTIST—Do this however you like; it doesn't have to be rooftops—they can be chasing him down the street, or through the park. We just wanna give the READERS the impression that, because of that bounty, things have changed for our Friendly Neighborhood Bug; that as soon as he showed his pretty little

Any dillweed knows that one of the biggest parts of any comic is the splash page—that big one-panel spread that kicks off the action. Each month, an artist translates the writer's words into a clean, action-packed and attention-getting piece of art.

Here's the Deal...

To the left is an excerpt from spider-scribe Todd Dezago's script for *Sensational Spider-Man* #25, explaining what the issue's splash page should look like. What you have to do is simple: Using Todd's script as a guide, take your favorite pencils, pens and crayons (if you feel so inclined) and draw your own splash page for *Sensational Spider-Man* #25. The artist with the most creative, original and cool piece will win these fine...

PRIZES!

Grand Prize (1): One lucky Web-head will win an original Spider-Man piece by Spider-Man artist Mike Wieringo, a Spider-Man cold-cast porcelain bust from Legends in 3 Dimensions and a *Sensational Spider-Man* #25 signed by Joe Bennett and Todd Dezago.

First Prize (20): Twenty almost-as-lucky artist wannabes will get a *Sensational Spider-Man* #25 signed by Joe Bennett and Todd Dezago.

MARVEL COMICS®

This contest is sponsored by Marvel Comics and Legends in 3 Dimensions.

Fill this out, attach your entry and put it an envelope. Send to: "Splash Page...TINGLING" Art Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. Deadline is February 27, 1998.

Friendly Neighborhood Legal

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Marvel Comics, Legends in 3 Dimensions, their immediate families and chumlies who like Venom as a good guy. C'mon—the guy kicks ass as a villain! Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach the form or card to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: "Splash Page...TINGLING" Art Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Y'know, Mike Wieringo draws a pretty spiffy Spidey. You agree? Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by February 27, 1998.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on originality and creativity by Wizard Press. Winning entries will be selected on or about March 13, 1998.

For a list of winners, available after March 13, 1998, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: "Splash Page ...TINGLING" Art Winners List, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

"Splash Page... Tingling" Contest Entry Form

DEADLINE IS FEBRUARY 27, 1998!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

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Phone Number (with area code) _____

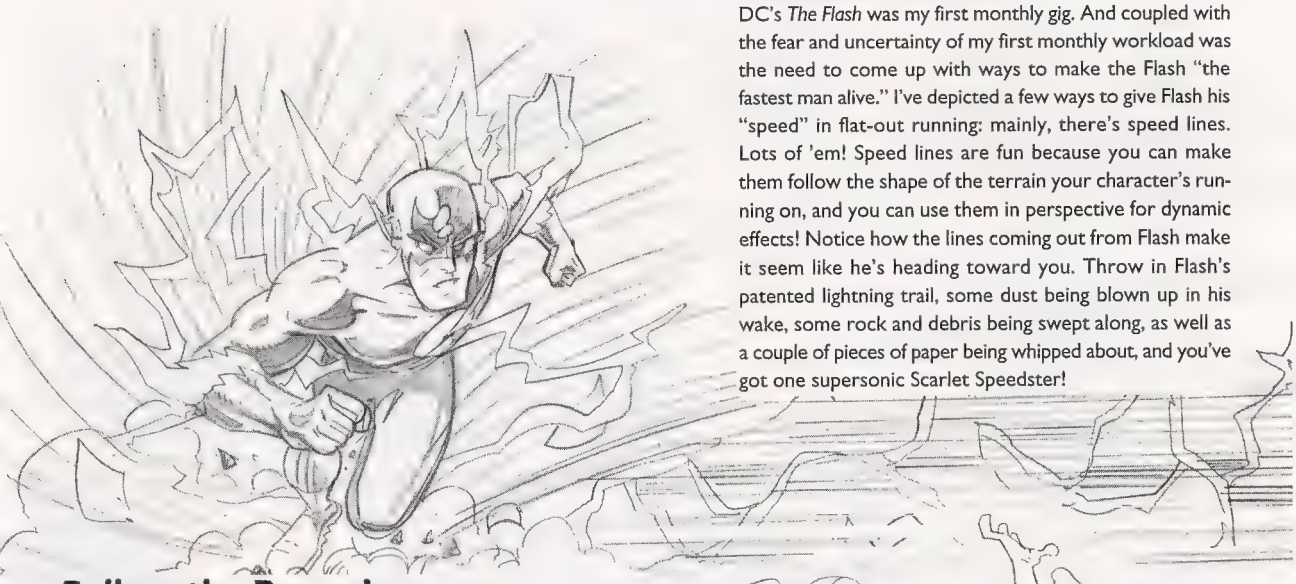
Did you attach your splash page entry?

Basic Training

this month's host: Mike Wieringo

How to Make Characters Move

Hey, all you artists out there. I've drawn a wide variety of characters, from Flash to Robin to Spider-Man—and one big thing they all have in common is they gotta move! They're all high-action heroes, so they give you lots of opportunity to explore ways to create "movement." This month, I'm going to share with you just how I like bringing life to the stuff I draw! Giving your characters the illusion of life is one of the most important elements of drawing comics. Not only does it help your storytelling and the believability of your characters, but it's just downright fun. The best way to learn how to draw motion, of course, is by watching it. Check out the people around you. Watch TV, especially sporting events like gymnastics. Basically, look everywhere. Now, with that said, let's get moving!



Man on the Run

DC's *The Flash* was my first monthly gig. And coupled with the fear and uncertainty of my first monthly workload was the need to come up with ways to make the Flash "the fastest man alive." I've depicted a few ways to give Flash his "speed" in flat-out running: mainly, there's speed lines. Lots of 'em! Speed lines are fun because you can make them follow the shape of the terrain your character's running on, and you can use them in perspective for dynamic effects! Notice how the lines coming out from Flash make it seem like he's heading toward you. Throw in Flash's patented lightning trail, some dust being blown up in his wake, some rock and debris being swept along, as well as a couple of pieces of paper being whipped about, and you've got one supersonic Scarlet Speedster!

Follow the Bouncing Superhero

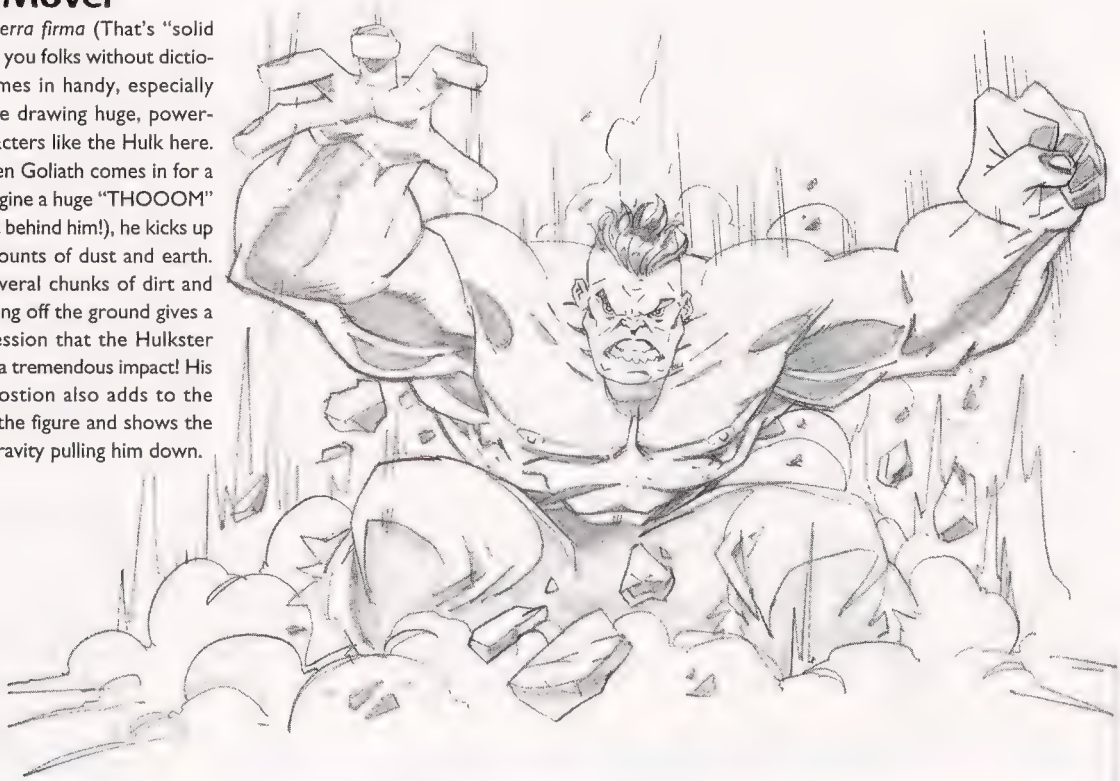
One of the coolest ways to show the incredible combination of speed and agility Spider-Man has is through multiple images! You can show Spidey bouncing, twisting and turning in any way you can imagine. Just draw smooth transitions between the moves (as if you were an animator). Making the images flow from one to another will help Web-head look even more fluid and graceful. Multiple images are also a great way to show the Flash's blazing speed as he super-speed-punches some overgrown baddie into submission!

Water World

Even though there's probably very little pure oxygen to produce bubbles at the depths Aquaman hangs out (and rumbles) in, it's fun to take a little artistic license and use them to indicate just where ol' Harpoon-Hand's coming from. They also create a sense of the water being stirred up around him as he rockets on through! Notice how the bubbles from his hand to his head help show movement in his right arm, while the smaller bubbles trailing off by his feet project the image that he's swimming towards us. Some schools of fish tagging along help with the effect!

Earth Mover

Good old *terra firma* (That's "solid ground" for you folks without dictionaries!) comes in handy, especially when you're drawing huge, powerhouse characters like the Hulk here. As the Green Goliath comes in for a landing (Imagine a huge "THOOOM" sound effect behind him!), he kicks up massive amounts of dust and earth. Drawing several chunks of dirt and rock bouncing off the ground gives a great impression that the Hulkster landed with a tremendous impact! His squatting postion also adds to the dynamic of the figure and shows the realism of gravity pulling him down.

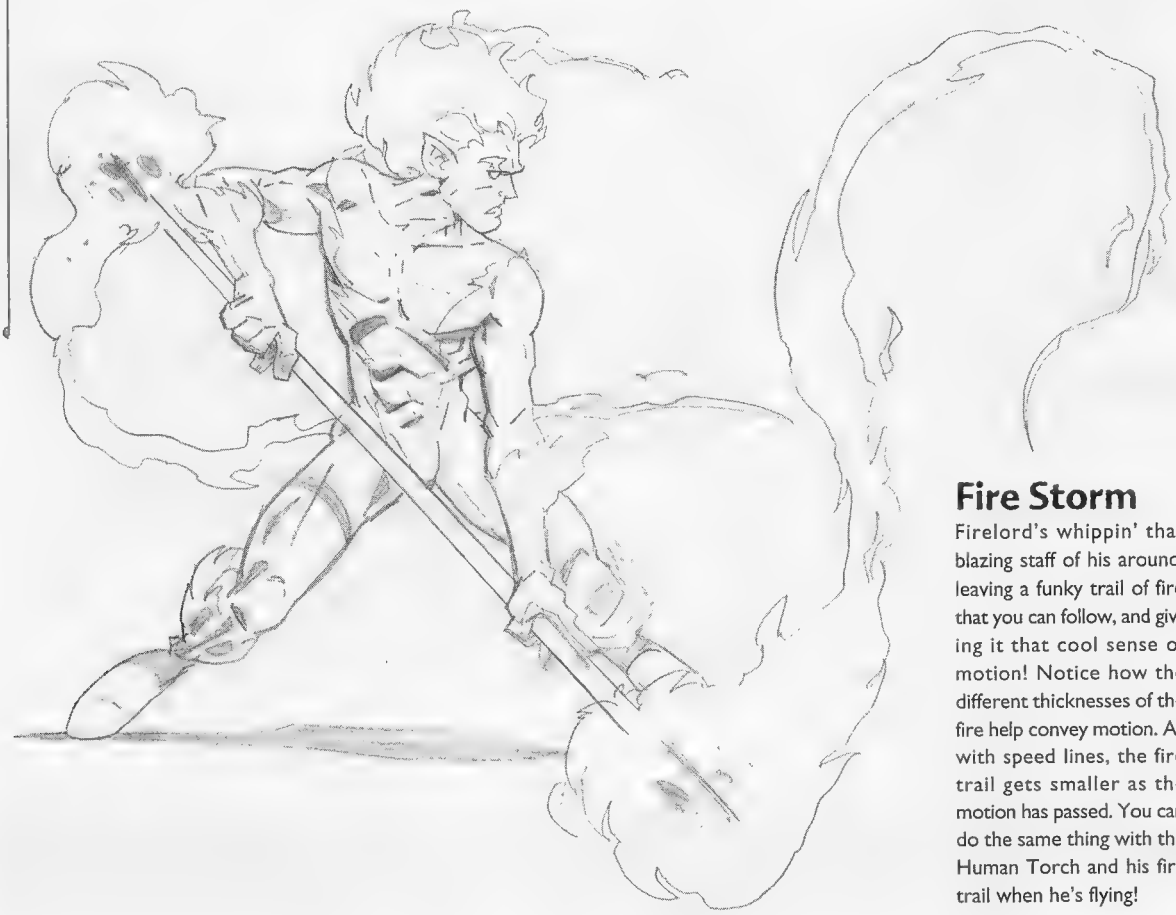


It's also fun to draw one big bad-ass knocking another bad-ass across the ground. Show his back and rear end (the one that got pounded, that is) grinding up chunks of rock, dirt and dust as his bruised ego (and butt) drag across the ground! (Check out how I handled that kinda action in *Sensational Spider-Man* #14, guest-starring the Hulk!)

Air Walker

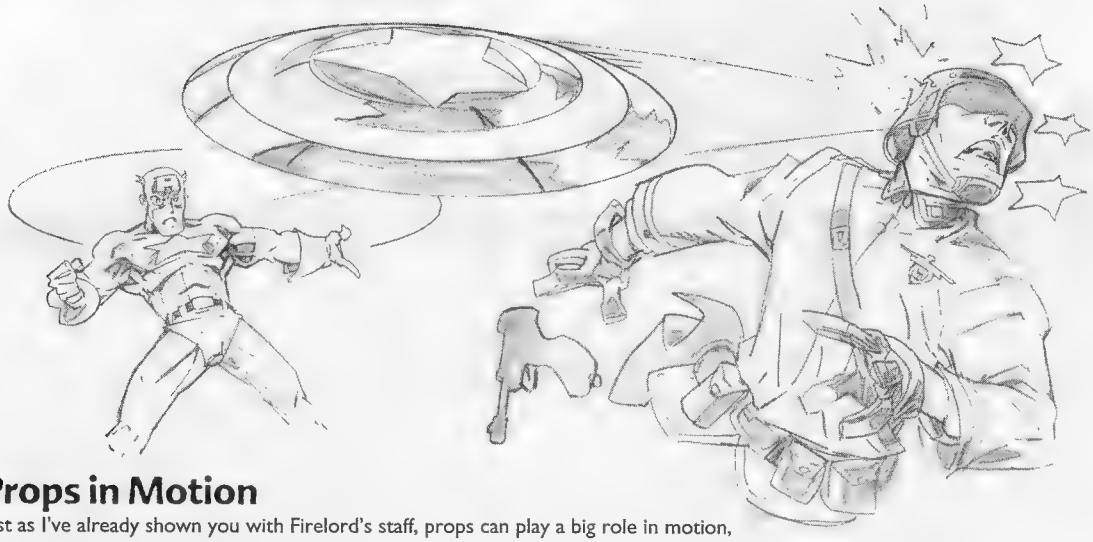
You can use air, or more specifically wind, to create some really cool, lively effects. Capes are great for this type of thing! You can liven up even the most static of scenes with capes and wind—like this Batman I drew! He's tensed up, stalking, ready to strike…but he's not doin' a lotta moving. So how do you add some motion? Simple. Make his cape billow ominously in the night air. Toss in some blowin' papers and some cool bats and you've got one awesome scene!

Just think how cool you could make a scene with flying heroes like Superman! Or better yet, think of Spawn for the ultimate in billowing, flowing capes!



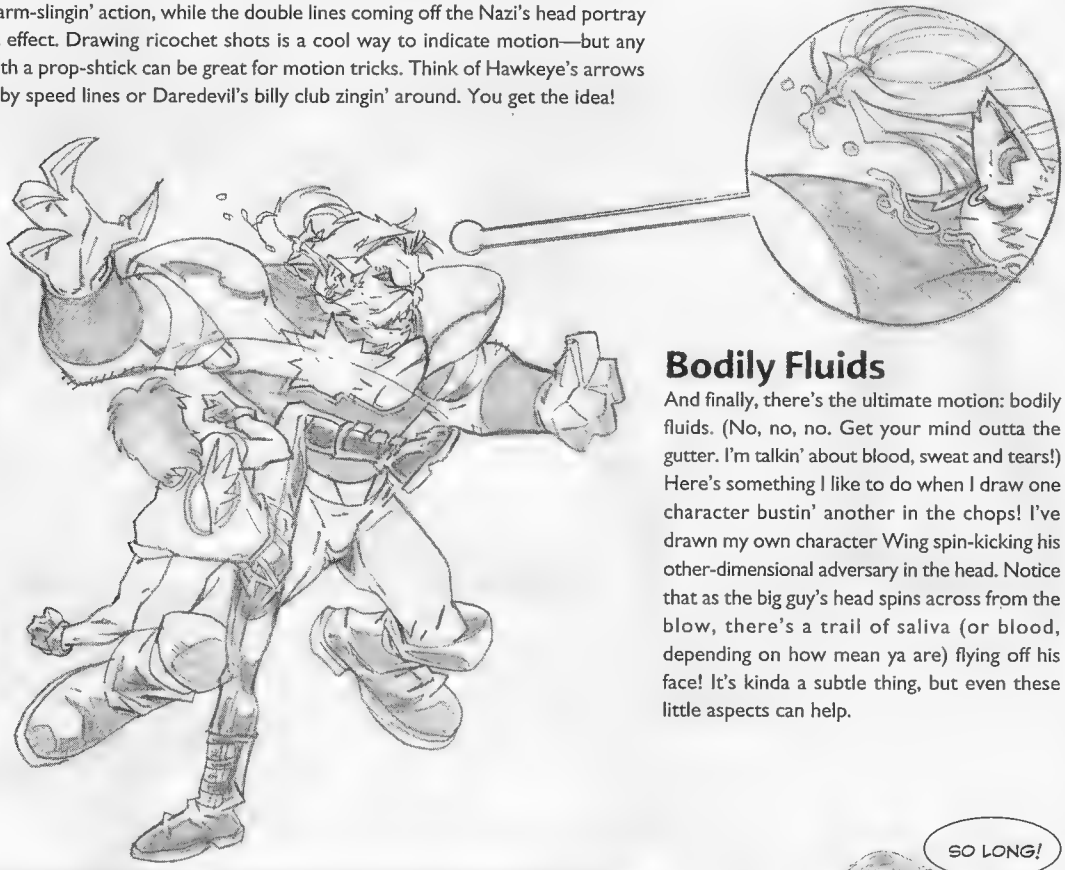
Fire Storm

Firelord's whippin' that blazing staff of his around, leaving a funky trail of fire that you can follow, and giving it that cool sense of motion! Notice how the different thicknesses of the fire help convey motion. As with speed lines, the fire trail gets smaller as the motion has passed. You can do the same thing with the Human Torch and his fire trail when he's flying!



Props in Motion

Just as I've already shown you with Firelord's staff, props can play a big role in motion, too! Here, I've drawn a shot of Captain America bustin' a Nazi upside the head with his shield, using some simple single and double motion lines. The single line by Cap's hands conveys his arm-slingin' action, while the double lines coming off the Nazi's head portray the ricochet effect. Drawing ricochet shots is a cool way to indicate motion—but any character with a prop-shtick can be great for motion tricks. Think of Hawkeye's arrows surrounded by speed lines or Daredevil's billy club zingin' around. You get the idea!



Bodily Fluids

And finally, there's the ultimate motion: bodily fluids. (No, no, no. Get your mind outta the gutter. I'm talkin' about blood, sweat and tears!) Here's something I like to do when I draw one character bustin' another in the chops! I've drawn my own character Wing spin-kicking his other-dimensional adversary in the head. Notice that as the big guy's head spins across from the blow, there's a trail of saliva (or blood, depending on how mean ya are) flying off his face! It's kinda a subtle thing, but even these little aspects can help.

Well, once again, folks, it's been great sharing some of my "tricks" with you! Unfortunately, due to space constraints, I could only present a few examples. But remember, just think of your characters as always moving, always in motion…you're just freezing them at one specific point where as much stuff is happenin' as you've got the gumption (or time) to squeeze in! So keep practicing, and I hope we can do this again real soon! **W**

Mike Wieringo, whose fluid pencils can be seen monthly in the pages of Marvel's Sensational Spider-Man, goes by the name *"Ringo" on the dance floor. Man, can that guy move!*

THE TOY CHEST

BY **TOM PALMER JR.**

TAKING CARE OF BIZ'NESS

Last month, *Wizard* gave you the lowdown on some of Toy Biz's newest Marvel offerings for '98—everything from X-Man to Sandman. Well, this month we've finally got the pictures to show ya, and they're bound to knock ya on yer ass!

Marvel mainstays like the X-Men and Spider-Man are back in force in '98 from Toy Biz, and they're joined by none other than the Silver Surfer. Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's Sentinel of the Spaceways gets the big action figure punch with collector-driven action figures and toys based on the new "Silver Surfer" animated series. The Biz is offering up a couple different versions of the Surfer himself, as well as Marvel cosmic mainstays like Thanos, Drax the Destroyer, Ronan the Accuser, Nova (the Richard Rider version) and those nasty Skrulls.

Not to be left out, the new Spider-Man assortments will offer up a bunch of different characters from all sides of the Marvel Universe. Look for a new Spidey, sportin' his Electro-battlin' togs from *Amazing Spider-Man* #425, as well as the Sandman, Madame Web and the Red Skull!

Okay, enough yappin'! Check out these cool pics, and start saving up your hard-earned cash. If you call yourself a *true* Marvel fan, you're gonna want to snag every single one of these funky figures!

X-Man

Electro-Insulated Spidey

Nova

Silver Surfer

Star Surfer

Toy Biz toys photos by Paul Schiraldi

Red Skull
Sandman
Drax the Destroyer
Madame Web
Ronan the Accuser
Raze
Thanos

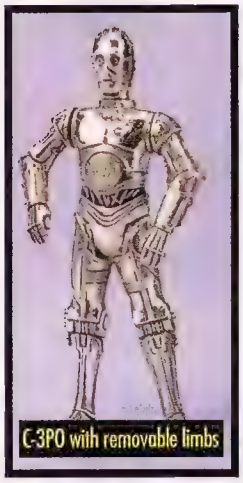
NEVER ENOUGH STAR WARS

Just when you thought it was over, Kenner's unveiled even more pictures of its new Star Wars figures! While they haven't announced any more new stuff (Yet!), we were able to snag some more pictures of the way-cool stuff we told ya about last month. Take a gander at doomed Rebel pilot Biggs Darklighter, starfish-faced alien Ishi Tib, bounty hunter Zuckuss, Endor Rebel Soldier, C-3P0 with removable limbs and two cute 'n' cuddly Ewoks. (Awww...) Look for these guys to hit stores in the first quarter of '98.

Biggs Darklighter

Endor Rebel Soldier

Zuckuss


C-3PO with removable limbs

Ishi Tib

Ewoks (l. to r.) Logray and Wicket

Star Wars photos courtesy of Kenner

WITCHBLADE

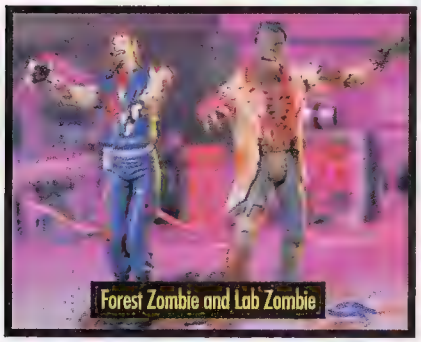
Sculpting maestro Clayburn Moore is 75 percent done with the first group of Witchblade figures, the second toy line from Moore Action Collectibles. Sara Pezzini is here in all her half-nekkid glory, and she's joined by Ian Nottingham and Medieval Witchblade, straight outta 1996's *Medieval Spawn/Witchblade* mini-series. The as-yet unsculpted Kenneth Irons rounds out the group, set to hit comic book and hobby stores in the spring of 1998.

Photos courtesy of Moore Action Collectibles

RESIDENT EVIL!

Riding the wave of video game popularity, Toy Biz is serving up some creepy toys based on Capcom's zombie-shoot-'em-up *Resident Evil*. This line of figures will include tons of icky creatures covered in gore, blood and maggots. Yum. Anyhoo, this first batch of figures includes the heroes Chris Redfield and Jill Valentine, each packed with a creepy sidekick (Chris with the exploding Cerberus dog, and Jill with the Web-Spinner spider), a zombie two-pack, the Hunter (with the fly-like Chimera) and the biggest baddie of 'em all, Tyrant. Look for these guys in early '98. And if they go over well, we could be seeing a whole lot more evil, creepy things from Toy Biz. (continued on next page)

Chris Redfield and Cerberus


Forest Zombie and Lab Zombie

Tyrant

Jill Valentine and Web-Spinner

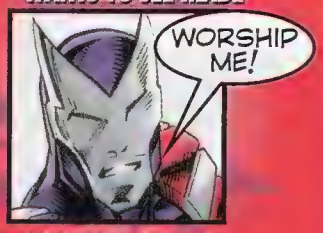
Hunter and Chimera

Resident Evil photos courtesy of Toy Biz

Photo by Paul Schiraldi

WISH LIST

THE 10 FIGURES THAT *WIZARD* WANTS TO SEE MADE



1) Thunderbolts (Marvel Heroes)
Toy Biz has just gotta give these buddies their own toy line. Just make each member part of a two-pack—one figure in his good guy Bolts costume and the other as his true evil identity, from the Masters of Evil.

2) Amalgam (DC/Marvel Heroes)
We're gonna keep asking until we're blue in the face! An action figure line for Marvel and DC's smooshed-together universe would kick major heiney. Just make sure it includes Dark Claw, Dr. Strangefate, Iron Lantern and Super-Soldier.

3) Wonder Woman (DC Heroes)
There hasn't been a Wonder Woman figure since the '80s, so it's about time we got a new version of this Amazonian princess. Give WW a golden lasso and some nifty removable *Kingdom Come* armor and she'd hold a special place in every toy fan's collection.

4) Bastion (Marvel Heroes)
The newest X-Men villain would make for one bad-ass action figure. Give him a containment unit to trap poor ol' Jubilee and he'd be all set to stomp those pesky mutes.

5) Nightwing (DC Heroes)
We're still waiting for a faithful adaptation of Nightwing. Dick Grayson's gotta have a bunch o' Batarangs and a retractable jump line so he can bop around Bludhaven all night long.

6) Teen Titans gift set (DC Heroes)
Titans Together! DC collectors keep getin' the short shrift while Marvel maniacs get all sorts of cool toys. All Kenner has to do is serve up the Wolfman-Perez-era Titans in a high-class gift set, a la Toy Biz's Classic X-Men set, and fans'd be drowning in their own drool.

7) Oola (Star Wars)
That green-skinned chick from Jabba's Palace is perfect material for an action figure. Just make sure she's multi-poseable for those sexy dance moves, and throw in that cackling idjit Salacious Crumb for kicks.

8) Black Panther (Marvel Heroes)
Give the Fantastic Four's buddy T'Challa a removable mask and spring-loaded punching action so he can hand out beatings to all sorts of nasty jungle guys.

9) The Maxx
We know there's already a Maxx action figure from McFarlane Toys, but how cool would it be if Sam Keith's weirder-than-weird comic had its own toy line? Throw in Mr. Gone and that icky banana-slug thing, and you'd have one of the strangest lines ever.

10) Hydra thug (Marvel Heroes)
Toy Biz is sitting on a gold mine. Every superhero needs oceans of mindless thugs to whup ass on, so why not make tons of Marvel's no. 1 goons, them green smock-wearin' Hydra guys. Heck, why not make the Hand ninjas and those evil bee-keeper AIM soldiers, too!

Hey! Keep sending them Top 10 lists! You've already made a difference! Drop us a note with your "dream figures" at:

Top Wish List
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920

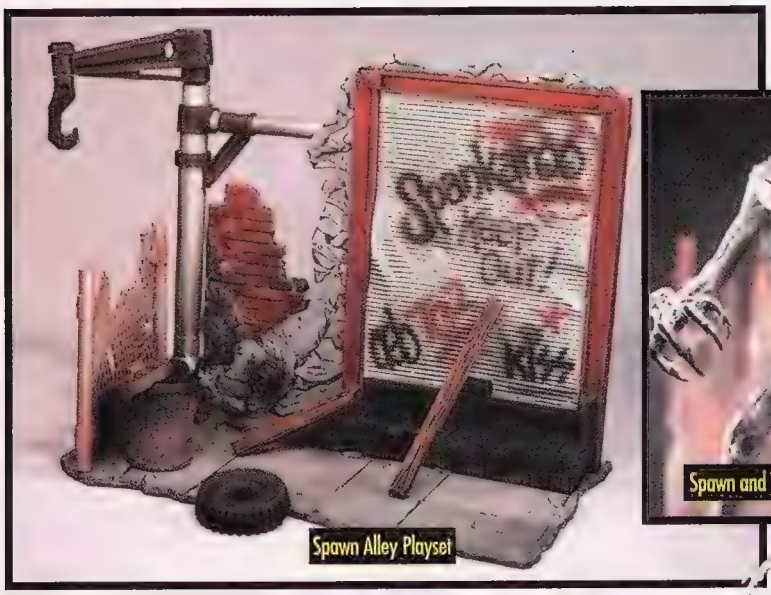
Or e-mail us at:
WizardTGTC@aol.com

SPAWN: THE MOVIE PLAYSETS

Timed to celebrate the release of "Spawn" to home video, McFarlane Toys is releasing an assortment of three movie playsets, inspired by the mega-popular McFarlane's Monsters sets. These highly detailed sets, each recreating a key scene from the big-screen incarnation of Spawn, come with two mini-sized (around 4 inches) figures and tons o' goodies. You can choose from the Graveyard Playset (with Al Simmons and Clown), Spawn Alley Playset (with Spawn and Violator) or the Final Battle Playset (with Spawn and a Violator head that morphs out of the playset wall). Now you can reenact your favorite scenes from ol' pizza face's big screen debut! All three sets are tentatively set to hit stores in January. W

ToyFare *assistant editor Tom Palmer Jr. is always grossed out by that scene in "Lost Boys" when Kiefer Sutherland turns a pint of rice into a pint of maggots. Man, that's sick.*

Final Battle Playset



Spawn Alley Playset

Spawn and Violator

Graveyard Playset with Al Simmons and the Clown

Spawn from the Final Battle Playset

All photos courtesy of McFarlane Toys

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CALL FOR THE LATEST ASSORTMENTS

Top Cow Productions Presents:

The "DARK-ENNIS" Contest

In honor of writer Garth Ennis' return to *The Darkness*, Top Cow has commissioned 11 covers for *The Darkness* #11 by 11 different artists, including the Hildebrandt Brothers, Whilce Portacio and Dale Keown, as well as regular artists from the Top Cow stable. As you can guess, each and every one of these covers is cool, but the folks at Top Cow want to know which one tickles your fancy most, and they also want to display their love of the democratic process.

Here's where you come in: Top Cow wants you to vote for the coolest *Darkness* #11 cover. Go to your local comic store and check the covers out. If you happen to choose the cover that gets the most votes, you could score these cool...

PRIZES

Grand Prize (1): Okay, deep breath...one lucky Darkaholic will win the extremely limited chromium cover version of *The Darkness* #11 signed by the *Darkness* art team of Marc Silvestri and Batt, an original sketch by Silvestri, one copy of each of the 11 different editions of *The Darkness* #11 signed by Silvestri and Batt, *The Darkness* Ace Edition signed by Silvestri and Batt, the *Darkness* preview signed by Silvestri and Batt, a Darkness poster, a limited-edition motion card from the *Darkness/Witchblade: Family Ties* trading card set and a whole box of the *Darkness/Witchblade: Family Ties* trading cards.

First Prize (1): One almost-as-lucky Jackie Estacado-phile will win *The Darkness* Ace Edition signed by Silvestri and Batt, a box of the *Darkness/Witchblade: Family Ties* trading cards, the limited chromium version of *The Darkness* #11 signed by Silvestri and Batt, and *The Darkness* motion card from the *Darkness/Witchblade: Family Ties* trading card set.

Second Prize (5): Five Dark-folks will each get *The Darkness* Ace Edition signed by Silvestri and Batt, The Darkness poster and an extremely limited chromium cover version of *The Darkness* #11 signed by Silvestri and Batt.

This contest is sponsored by Top Cow Productions.

The Ennis and Outs of the Law

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Top Cow Productions, their immediate families and yahoos who think life without sex is supposed to be entertaining. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and be sure to list your favorite cover. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: The "Dark-Ennis" Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. What the heck kinda name is Batt? These one-name names like Cher and Madonna have gotta go! Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by February 27, 1998.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Winning entries will be selected on or about March 13, 1998.

For a list of winners, available after March 13, 1998, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: The "Dark-Ennis" Contest Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Fill this out and put it in an envelope. Send to: The "Dark-Ennis" Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. Deadline is February 27, 1998.

The "Dark-Ennis" Contest Entry Form

DEADLINE IS FEBRUARY 27, 1998!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

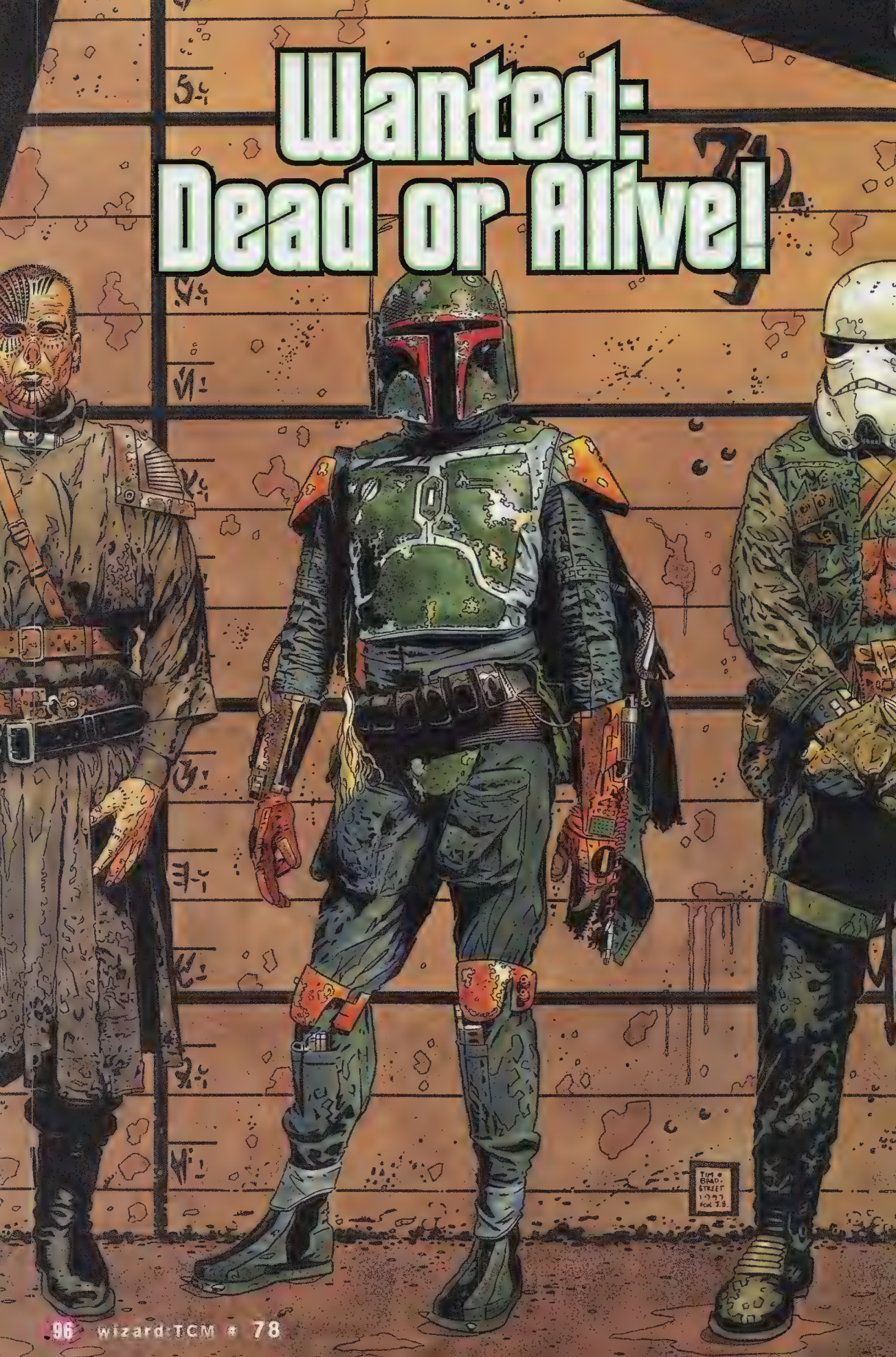
Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Favorite cover?

Wanted: Dead or Alive!



STAR WARS® BOBA FETT™

Dark Horse Comics invites you back to the ***Star Wars*** universe and into the world of the coolest bad guy in ***Star Wars: Boba Fett* #1/2!**

Boba Fett, the baddest bounty hunter this side of the Sarlacc Pit, is back and he is none too happy. The man who brought in that smuggler Han Solo is coming at you in a story of big bugs, bigger guns and one big boom!

This #1/2 is the kind of bounty anyone would search the galaxy for, and you can only get it through this special offer! Just send in the properly completed order form with three dollars and get a piece of the action! That's the deal, "Pray we do not alter it further."

Within the *Star Wars: Boba Fett* #1/2, you'll find this rich bounty:

- **A brand-new exclusive *Star Wars* story written by John Wagner (*Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight*) and drawn by Carlos Ezquerra (*Preacher: The Good Ol' Boys*).**
- **A four-page *Star Wars* sketchbook! An exclusive look behind the scenes of this incredibly cool comic!**
- **And the most bountiful part of all— this is a *Star Wars* comic you won't find anywhere else! This exclusive Dark Horse/Lucasfilm comic is available through this one-time *Wizard* offer only!**

Don't miss out on this piece of *Star Wars* history!

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No reproductions of this coupon will be accepted. This coupon must be sent in the accompanying envelope, one coupon per comic. You may put additional coupons in the same envelope. Remit by check or money order only. Canadian orders remit $4.00, other foreign orders remit $6.00. All payment must be in U.S. funds drawn on a U.S. bank. Make all checks payable to Wizard Press. Offer good only while supply lasts. Please allow eight to 12 weeks for delivery. Changes of address will not be forwarded unless Wizard Press is notified in writing by March 18, 1998. *Star Wars* ® & © 1997 Lucasfilm Ltd. Title and character and place names protected by all applicable trademark laws. Used under authorization. Dark Horse Comics ® and the Dark Horse logo are trademarks of Dark Horse Comics, Inc., registered in various categories and countries. All rights reserved. *Wizard* and the *Wizard* logotype are registered trademarks of Wizard Press.

THIS OFFER EXPIRES MARCH 18, 1998.

HOMEMADE HEROES

THE ARENA FOR FAN-MADE ACTION FIGURES

ALPHA FLIGHT

Andy Livingston of Bel Air, Md.

Canadian superheroes. Can you say "oxymoron"? Anyway, Guardian was made from a Toy Biz Spidey body and a Kenner Batman head. Snowbird was once a Toy Biz Storm, while Northstar took shape from a Toy Biz Morph, and Sasquatch was formed from a hand-crafted Mego mixed with Mattel He-Man body parts. Aurora was also made from a Toy Biz Storm, Shaman is a Toy Biz Mr. Fantastic with a swell repaint, Marrina was a Kenner Super Powers Wonder Woman and little ol' Puck leaps into action as a doctored Applause Cyclops PVC figure. Aw, ain't that cute?

MARTIAN MANHUNTER

John Achziger of Spokane, Wash.

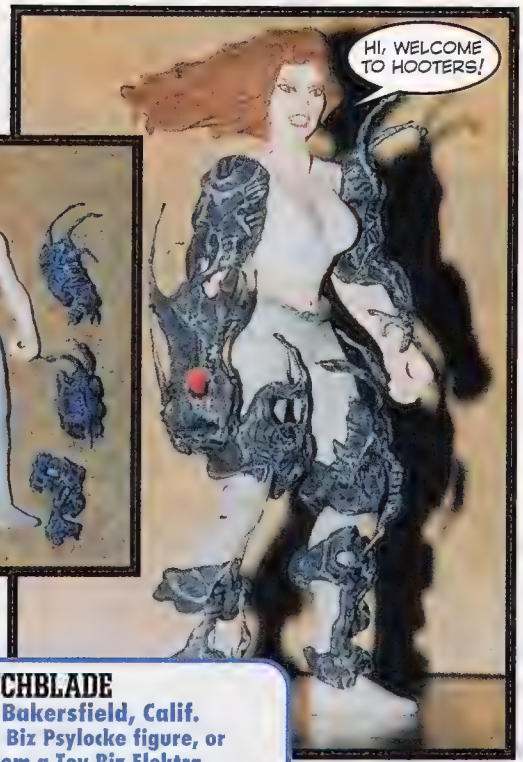
Wow, a 10-inch Martian!!! By repainting a 10-inch Toy Biz Silver Surfer figure, DC's JLA core member Martian Manhunter pops to life. (Oh, and the cape was made by John's wife Dana.)

All of these figures were made from plain old, ordinary figures and household materials. The talented Grand Prize Winner flies off with a Hellina Platinum figure, a Hellina Blood-Splattered figure and a regular Hellina figure, all signed by her creator, Joe Zyskowski! The Runner-Up scores a signed Platinum figure and signed Blood-Splattered figure, while everyone else gets a signed Blood-Splattered figure and signed regular figure! Fine work, people!

Skybolt Toyz

Many thanks to the Skybolt Toyz folks for the kick-butt prizes!

SPIDER-BOY
David Mann of Richmond, Va.
A true amalgam, this. The fun-loving Spider-Man/Superboy combination is made reality as David morphs a Toy Biz Morph figure into the web-slinging super-teenager.



WITCHBLADE
Dan Poon of Bakersfield, Calif.
Made from a Toy Biz Psylocke figure, or wait...made from a Toy Biz Elektra figure...whichever one it was, this Witchblade came from it, and looks darn rootin'-tootin' neato, 'specially with those unknown accessories.

SPACE GHOST
Matt Sczepanski of Springfield, Ill.
Spaaaaaaaaaaaace Ghoooooooost! Matt created the greatest superhero and talk show host known to man out of a Kenner Lightning Strike Batman and a Toy Biz Magneto cape. Where's Gleep?

FREDDIE MERCURY
Süvöltós Tamás of Budapest, Hungary
We can hear this former Hasbro G. I. Joe figure singing now: "I want to ride my bi-CYCLE, I want to ride my bike..." Need we say more...?

If you're interested in entering the homemade figure contest, send well-lit, clear, color photographs (No Polaroids, and put 'em in a cool or funny pose!), along with your name, address, a DETAILED DESCRIPTION of how you created your figure, and your full phone number (including area code) to:

HOMEMADE HEROES
c/o Wizard Press
PO Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

JUNK DRAWER

By David Borak and the *Wizard* Staff

All items, except where noted, can be found at your friendly neighborhood comic shop. If you can't find a product, just ask your favorite comic shop owner to special order it for you.

Little bits of everything in the world of comic-related merchandise

STATUE OF STEEL

The Superman 1998 Statue ($195) is DC's newest edition to its line of cold-cast porcelain statues. Featuring the Man of Steel breaking free from the clutches of a many-tentacled robot (who just lost a limb to Superman), the statue's limited to 6,000 figures and based on designs by artist Jerry Ordway.

Superman '98 statue

YOU SANK MY A-WING!

Electronic Battleship meets "Star Wars" in Tiger Toys' new strategy game, *Galactic Battle* ($49.99). Players can assume command of the Rebel Fleet or the Imperial Armada and head up a fleet of five spaceships (10 in all, from A-Wing Fighters to Imperial Star Destroyers), all coming straight from the Star Wars films. The game, currently on sale, is for one or two players, features speech and sound effects from the Star Wars Trilogy and has three levels of difficulty.

HULK GETS BRONZED

Bowen Designs and Marvel Entertainment bring you the Hulk Bronze Statue ($2,500). This 13-inch tall bronze statue features the Hulk mounted on a slab of black Spanish marble and is limited to only 100 copies. Sculpted by Randy Bowen (based on Hulk's original look by Jack Kirby), the first 35 collectors to reserve their bronzes will receive a cold-cast bronze bust of Bruce Banner! Give Bowen Designs a ring at (503) 786-0542 and reserve your copy today.

Hulk statue

FORCING A MONOPOLY

After the huge success of the *Monopoly Star Wars Collector's Edition* board game, Hasbro Interactive brings you *Monopoly Star Wars* ($49.99) on PC CD-ROM. Featuring the voice of Anthony Daniels (C-3PO) as the intergalactic banker, look for this puppy in computer software stores across the land right now.

MARVEL ON ICE

Get rid of your Mighty Ducks jersey and slip into a cool Marvel hockey jersey ($55.95) from Marvel and Polygram Merchandising instead. These 100 percent nylon hockey jerseys, featuring the Incredible Hulk, Wolverine or Spider-Man, are easy to care for and are color-coordinated to match the colors of the superhero on the front. Look for 'em in fine clothing stores everywhere this January.

ASTRO-MAGNETISM

Astro City's great heroes hold up society, and now they can hold up stuff on your fridge!

Marvel hockey jerseys

Astro City magnet

The Astro City Magnet Set #1 ($6.95) from Graphitti Designs contains three full-color magnets—Jack-in-the-Box, Samaritan and the Confessor (shown above)—featuring artwork from series artists Brent Anderson and Alex Ross. Look for it in January.

Product of the Month

BATMAN VS. COOKIE MONSTER

Available in Warner Bros. Studio Stores right now, pick up a Batman or Superman cookie jar, each crafted of hand-painted ceramic. The 12-inch tall Batman cookie jar ($40) features the animated Batman reaching for his utility belt. Boy, will he ever be surprised when he realizes his head comes off and cookies go inside! A 13-inch tall Superman cookie jar ($40) shows the animated Man of Steel breaking through steel chains. And yep, he'll be just as surprised as the Dark Knight. Cookies not included.

LI'L JABBA AND FRIENDS

The Ewoks ain't the only cute critters from Star Wars anymore, as Kenner brings you the Star Wars Plush Buddies ($8.50)! Each plush doll is soft, cuddly, small and suitable for children. You'll find Chewbacca, Max Rebo, C-3PO, the Ewoks, the Jawas, Salacious Crumb and even Jabba the Hutt. Keep an eye out for them this January in toy stores everywhere.

A FLASHY SHIRT

Bolt into comfort this January with Graphitti Designs' Flash Long-Sleeve T-Shirt ($22.95 L-XL; $25.95 XXL). The crimson, 100 percent cotton shirt features Flash's trademark lighting bolt on its chest. Race you for it.

Star Wars Buddies

Flash T-shirt

FREAKY CHOCOLATE

Keep an eye out for the Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers Munchie Bars and Stash Box ($30), available in January from Kitchen Sink Press! There are three far-out wrapper designs, one of each Freak Brother: Freewheelin' Franklin, Phineas and Fat Freddy. You get 15 chocolate bars (five of each wrapper design) in a cigar-style box covered with full-color Freak Brothers art.

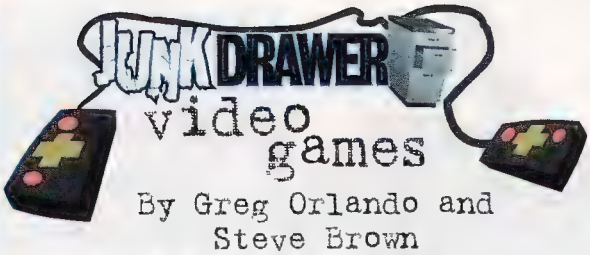
A MAD PRINT

This January, Mike Allred and WildStorm Emporium present the Limited-Edition Madman Iris Print ($100). Measuring 16" X 21" and printed on fine Arches watercolor paper, the print features all your favorite *Madman* characters atop a movie theater and comes signed by Allred himself!

Madman print

HEY! Are you a company putting out some super-groovy good fun in the form of comic-related merchandise like Daredevil's Paint-by-Number Set, Aquaman's Calamaris in a Cup or the Grow-Your-Own-Wookiee Kit? If so, we'd love to include 'em in our equally super-groovy "Junk Drawer" column. (Of course, we'd also like statues, T-shirts, novelties, magnets, etc.) Please send all info and sample products to:

Junk Drawer
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920



By Greg Orlando and Steve Brown

VIDEO ANIME-ANIA

Japanese animation (otherwise known as anime) is one o' the hottest things goin' today. From "Astro Boy" to "Sailor Moon," Americans just can't get enough of it. In Japan, anime has an almost symbiotic relationship with the video game industry. Popular video games, like *Street Fighter* and *Battle Arena Toshinden* are translated into anime, and vice versa. Anime-based video games wash ashore in America at an alarming rate; this month, we take a look at two high-profile game releases with ties to Japanese cartoons. Banzai!

Street Fighter EX Plus Alpha

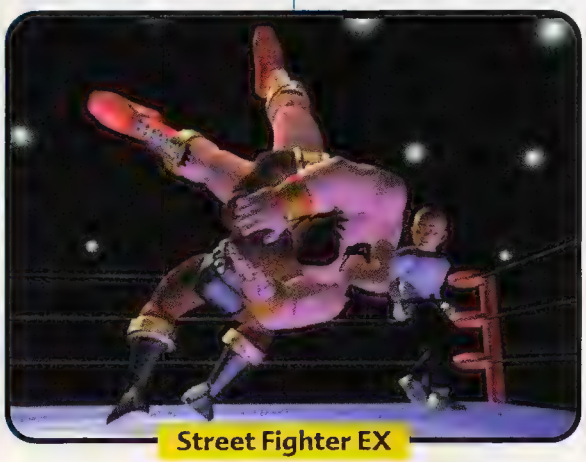
MANUFACTURER: Capcom
PLATFORM: PlayStation
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $49.99, available now

The Street Fighters have gone 3-D.

Street Fighter video games have always been the purists' fighting game of choice. They're pretty to gaze at, well animated, feature great characters, excellent control and offer varied moves, blocks and combos. Still, they're 2-D. While this ain't a particular liability, 3-D fighting games like *Tekken 2* and *Virtua Fighter* opened an all-new avenue for exploration.

With that said, *Street Fighter EX* is an old friend wearing a new pair of shoes. It's also a bit of an odd bird. Attempting to cash in on the 3-D craze, all the *EX* characters appear 3-D, yet all the game's fights are fought in 2-D—characters can't sidestep attacks or move up and down on any battlefield. It's a strange combination, but doesn't really detract from the gameplay.

Players can choose from 19 selectable characters and three hidden ones. Old favorites Guile, Akuma, Ryu, Ken and Chun-Li return to the fold with new moves and throws, and interesting newcomers like Skull-o-mania (a superhero wannabe who dresses like a skeleton) and Garuda (a human/demon hybrid) are thrown into the mix. The characters


Street Fighter EX

Dragon Ball GT: Final Bout

may not look as good as those in *Virtua Fighter,* but they are competently rendered. Besides, the gameplay more than makes up for any of the blockiness that mars the Street Fighters' appearances.

There are seven different modes of play, including a nifty training option that lets players chart their progress executing "super" moves. Gameplay wise, the characters move smoothly, the controls are dead-on responsive and there's enough challenge to keep even the most die-hard gamer on his toes. The game's "Super Combos," which allow a player to roll off a string of hits in succession, remain intact, giving users an added incentive for playing.

One minor gripe: When a character wins a fight and goes into his victory animation, all the spoken dialogue is in Japanese (even for the American Street Fighter Guile). What's up with that?

Dragon Ball GT: Final Bout

MANUFACTURER: Bandai
PLATFORM: PlayStation
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $49.99, available now

Here's a recipe for disappointment: Take the characters from the popular anime "Dragon Ball Z" and put them into a clunky, unresponsive fighting video game. Package, and sell.

Goku

Final Bout sports some stunning 3-D character graphics and backgrounds. It puts a nice twist on the fighting genre by allowing characters to fly and do battle while in the air. *Bout* also gives players the opportunity (via a training mode) to practice with a character, improve his skills and take the beefed-up character into combat. It's a neat touch and, certainly, a tremendously handy feature.

It's hard to dislike this game—until it's actually time to fight, that is. Despite the pretty graphics, the characters just move clumsily. The hero Little Goku doesn't walk toward his opponents—he *lurches* like some sort of zombie. Jump behind a character and it'll take about three seconds for him to notice and turn around. In that time, it's open season, and experienced players will have a field day. Pull off a super move, like Goku's "Kamehameha Wave," and the game will change perspective, actually *stopping* for 15 or so seconds while the character pulls back, draws in energy and fires the power ball. In response, players must enter a series of button presses to counter the move, but the timing has to be exact and is nearly impossible to pull off.

As for players unfamiliar with the "Dragon Ball" characters, they're in for a confusing time. The instructions do little to explain each character and, for some reason, multiple versions of the same character appear at various intervals. Goku appears as Goku, Little Goku, Super Little Goku and Super Saiyan Goku. These characters have different names, hair colors and body sizes (for Goku and Little Goku), but show no variation in actual gameplay. Is it confusing? Yes, it is. And if there's an awkward 3-D video game heaven, *Final Bout* should find a comfortable resting place. Fans of the "Dragon Ball" anime, however, will probably get a real kick outta this game.

IT'S YOUR MOVE

• Special moves and secret codes •

FANTASTIC FOUR CHEAT CODE

For four more options to Acclaim's *Fantastic Four* (PlayStation), go to the Main Menu (with the Thing's mug showing) and go to Options Menu. There, highlight the training bar and press all four trigger buttons at once (L1+L2+R1+R2). This will allow a user to access the following items on the options screen: Invincibility, Level Skip, Big Boy (which lets a user play a giant character or a tiny one) and Unlimited Replay.

PLUG IN

The Latest in Video Game News

BLASTO? NOT SO FAST-O

Captain Blasto, the Phil Hartman-voiced superhero star of Sony's video game *Blasto* has been delayed until February. Sony has been criticized for releasing too many average or below average games and, as a result of that criticism, has decided to put a little extra mustard in *Blasto*. A character-driven 3-D action/platform game with animation done in the style of '40s big studio cartoons, *Blasto* lets users step into a bonafide superhero's shoes.

DURAL DUE IN '98

Sega's next generation video game system, named Dural, will debut late next year. Information on this new system is spotty, but Dural's release will certainly mean the death knell of the 32-bit Saturn.

THE SKINNY

Comic book REVIEWS from *Wizard* Editors Brian Cunningham, Douglas Goldstein and Andrew Kardon

THE SCORING

6 THE BEST | 5 EXCELLENT | 4 GOOD | 3 SO-SO | 2 UGH | 1 CRAPOLA

HEROES FOR HIRE

Marvel's new team takes it too easy

Issues Reviewed: #1-#6
Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: Marvel Comics
Creative Team: John Ostrander, Pascual Ferry and Jaime Mendoza
Price/Frequency: $1.99/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Iron Fist has restarted the professional superhero agency Heroes For Hire. Joining him are his former partner Power Man, Black Knight, the new White Tiger, Ant-Man and a rotating supporting cast.

The Good: *Heroes For Hire* is comprised of some of Marvel's best second-tier heroes who usually don't get this level of exposure. Iron Fist works well as the team's leader. Black Knight has returned to the Marvel fold in a costume that fits his name and mythos. Ant-Man acts as the team's secret weapon by staying out of sight with his shrinking powers. Hercules, when part of the team, is interesting as a drunken braggart. And then there's Power Man rejoining the team under mysterious circumstances—is he truly a spy for the Master or just faking it?

The series' narration has a very lighthearted style, giving the book a fun, fan-friendly feel. For example, entertaining pop quizzes are scattered throughout issue #5 which not only tie into the story but also contain obscure Marvel trivia (the next issue actually answered each question). In particular, the first page intros of each issue always bring you up to speed and remind you to enjoy the book.

The Bad: Too many things happen too easily in this book just to move the story along. In issue #1, the U-Foes defeat the Hulk—a normally monumental task—in two pages just to further along that issue's plot. In issue #3, Nitro is built up as a big threat, only to be taken down by common shrapnel. In issue #4, Iron Fist leads the team into a trap because he (coincidentally) was under mind-control since earlier that morning.

In addition to Nitro, the U-Foes and an assortment of villains in #4 pop up and get defeated just as quickly. You never get the feeling any of them are doing any more than providing a few fight scenes to the book.

Lastly, the recent Deviants storyline inundates you with quick looks at obscure Eternal characters and a lot of old Deviant history that's not explained. (What is an Anti-Mind, anyway?) Perhaps it was supposed to be monumental, but since you don't get a detailed explanation of the backstory, it mostly leaves you bored.

The Buzz: *Heroes for Hire* has a good following and is climbing the charts. We'll see how it fares now that Marvel's main heroes have returned.

The Skinny: An attractive list of underused Marvel heroes are waiting for a sense of true drama and tension to add to this book.

Things happen too easily in Heroes For Hire, *just to move along the plot.*

It's awesome to see great second-tier heroes like Black Knight get more exposure.

The Verdict: 3 SO-SO

GREEN ARROW

Green Arrow Jr. misses his mark

Issues Reviewed: #122-#127
Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: DC Comics
Creative Team: Chuck Dixon, Dougie Braithwaite and Robin Riggs
Price/Frequency: $2.50/Monthly

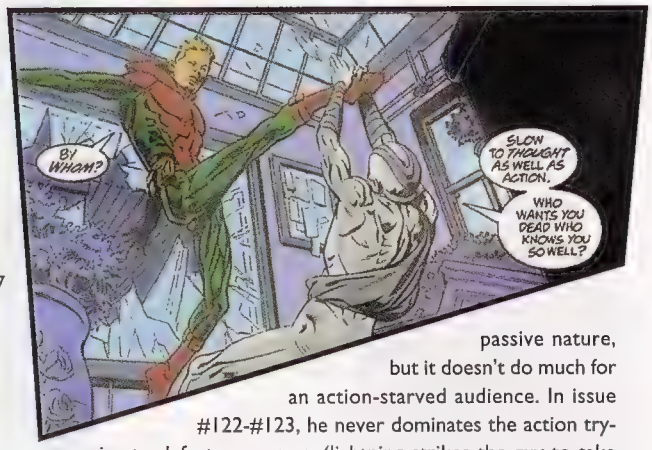
What You Need to Know: Connor Hawke, the son of the original Green Arrow, has taken up the archer's mantle. But unlike his aggressive father, Connor is a more passive hero.

The Good: Connor isn't your typical superhero. He's young, innocent and was raised in a monastery—which makes him the most forgiving and patient superhero around. His mom's actually married to a known arms dealer named Milo, yet she's stayed with him, duped into believing he's reformed. Oh yeah, Connor's also a vegetarian. Original concepts like this make Connor stand out in the sea of mundane superheroes.

The premises of some stories are interesting. In issue #122, a man mysteriously drowns in the middle of a desert, yet it hasn't rained in over six months. Then, in issue #127, Milo gets so fed up with Connor ruining his arms deals that he actually hires an assassin to kill him.

The covers to *Green Arrow* kick butt. In a world of blurry superhero comic racks, its covers are quite eye-catching in design and composition.

The Bad: While Connor is a peace-loving guy, he still needs to be more proactive. He doesn't fight much. Sure, it goes with his passive nature, but it doesn't do much for an action-starved audience. In issue #122-#123, he never dominates the action trying to defeat a con man (lightning strikes the guy to take him down). In #125-#126, he takes down a psychopath in a blah, page-and-a-half punch-out session. Let's see GA do what he does best with his bow, and not something Batman or Robin could do.



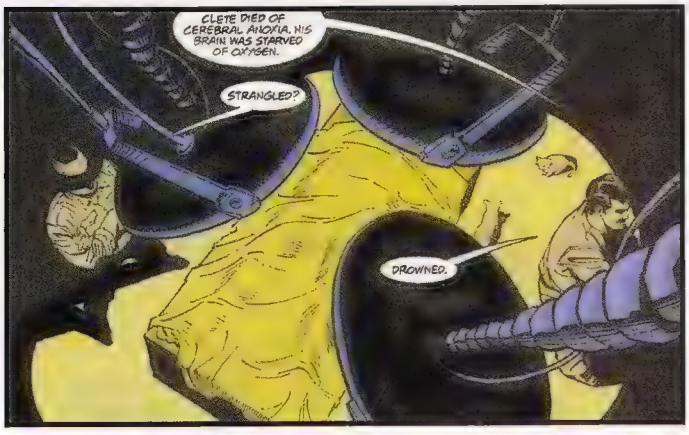
For a superhero comic, there are no supervillains. In fact, the only "supervillain" Connor actually fights is the Silver Monkey, a B-grade ninja assassin who Milo hires to kill Connor. Instead, Connor encounters a low-rent con man, bland arms dealers, rioting citizens and one criminal psychopath. We'd like to see some true supervillains in this series to really test this kid's mettle.

Green Arrow could stand a better supporting cast. Right now, all he has is a clichéd sensei who travels around with him adding occasional comic relief. Hopefully, now that Connor's settling down as the owner of a San Francisco apartment building with #127, a strong supporting cast will naturally follow.

Also, we never get a sense of what this series is all about. What is Connor's motivation? Why is he roaming the countryside? Clearly, more recapping is needed. As an example, during the three-part Green Arrow/Green Lantern crossover that ran through #125-#126, readers were never filled in on exactly what happened in *Green Lantern* #92's part two of the crossover. So if you didn't buy *GL*...tough luck.

The Buzz: Connor's recent induction into the mega-popular *JLA* should certainly give his book a higher profile.

The Skinny: A likable character, Green Arrow is unfortunately not given enough excitement and adventure to keep us interested.



Connor needs to do three things: fight more often, fight more supervillains and fight more using his bow than with his fists.

The book has interesting story premises, like when a man and 16 cows drown in the middle of desert terrain (in #122).

The Verdict: 3 SO-SO

THE SKINNY

MAJOR BUMMER

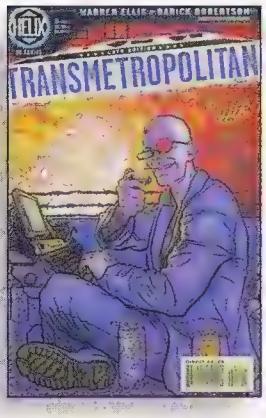
This book gives Major laughs

ÄÄÄ

THE SKINNY

TRANSMETROPOLITAN

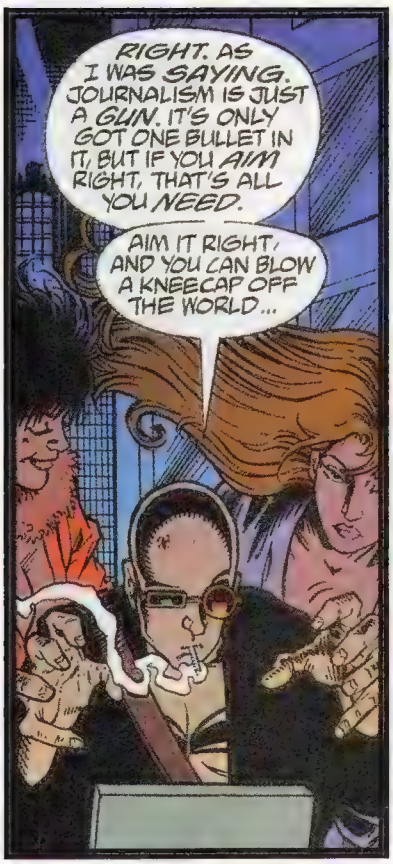
It's a mad, mad, mad, mad, world



Issues Reviewed: #1-#5
Genre: Political sci-fi satire for mature readers
Publisher: Helix/DC Comics
Creative Team: Warren Ellis, Darick Robertson and various inkers
Price/Frequency: $2.50/Monthly

What You Need to Know: In an overpopulated, cynical future, former superstar journalist Spider Jerusalem comes out of seclusion and reenters the society he despises in order to fulfill a pricey book contract.

The Good: This book has refreshingly biting social and political tones that emanate throughout the series. And that's mainly thanks to the characterization of Spider himself. He's an obnoxious, arrogant, violent, crotchety punk…and we find ourselves loving him for it. In issue #4, Spider happily gives the U.S. President an emergency case of diarrhea. Bottom line, Spider hates the world and loves hating it.



A lot of the high-tech sci-fi concepts are really neat. There's an obnoxious two-headed cat, an alien "sex change" (where instead of changing sex, humans can change their species to that of an alien), a bowel-loosening gun, a computer that's addicted to drugs and more.

This book is funny! There's tons of tongue-in-cheek humor. In issue #5 Spider calls up live TV talk shows, exposing political figures as frauds, adding that sexual pictures of them can be found on the Internet. In the same issue, Spider orders Air Jesus sneakers which allow its wearer to walk on water.

The stories don't wimp out either. When Spider exposes the cops for beating up on a community of innocent human/alien hybrid transients, the cops beat the crap outta Spider at story's end.

The highly detailed art and coloring are quite fluid and really set a perfectly cynical tone for this futuristic series.

The Bad: Sometimes the book goes a little over the top. In issue #1, he blew up a bar he frequented with a giant "Eat Me" missile. So was Spider's giant rant on society in the same issue, while he walked on top of cars.

While issue #1's large set-up was important for the understanding of the series, it was a bit too much to absorb. Readers who only picked up #1 could easily have been turned off to the entire series for good.

The Buzz: The first few issues sold well enough to warrant a trade paperback in January, reprinting issues #1-#3. But otherwise, there's zero buzz. No one's talking about this series, mainly because there's little interest in the Helix line.

The Skinny: Except for occasionally going a wee bit over the top, *Transmetropolitan* features a fabulously wonderful and insane world that we sure as heck wouldn't wanna live in…but definitely love to visit every month.

Concepts like human-to-alien sex changes make Transmetropolitan *a neat sci-fi read.*

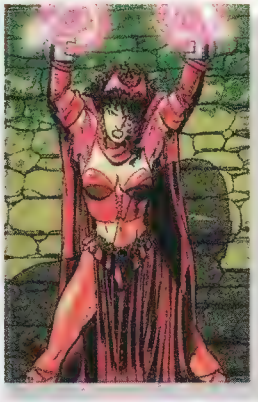
Spider is a lovable punk who hates the world and enjoys hating it.

The Verdict: 5 **EXCELLENT**

PICKS

THE MUST-READ COMICS SHIPPING IN JANUARY

ASTRO CITY #1/2



THE AVENGERS #2

TITLES DENOTED WITH AN **MR** CONTAIN MATERIAL THAT'S SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS.

AKIKO #22

SIRIUS Life without parole is no life at all, so when the rogue Spuckler gets tossed in a Brunk slammer, he decides to bust free. With the help of Morbilus Grendy (a prisoner who's been locked up so long, his jailers forgot about him), old Spuck is gonna dig his way to safety. What he finds, though, may make him turn around and crawl right back into jail. By Mark Crilley. **$2.50**

ASTRO CITY #1/2

HOMAGE/IMAGE When Michael Tenicek goes to sleep, he dreams of a mysterious woman named Miranda. The dreams are not only haunting Tenicek, they're ruining his life, and only the Hanged Man can show him what they truly mean. This issue reprints the acclaimed story from *Wizard's Astro City* #1/2 and also includes a nifty superhero love story written in prose. By Kurt Busiek, Brent Anderson and Will Blyberg. **$2.50**

THE AVENGERS #2

MARVEL In an alternate reality (Aargh!), the Avengers are serving as a queen's honor guard. The Scarlet Witch holds the key to their survival, but she's kinda chained to a dungeon wall at the moment. So which shocking person comes to their rescue? Wouldja believe...oops, outta room. By Kurt Busiek, George Pérez and Al Vey. **$1.99**

BONE #31

CARTOON BOOKS Fone and Smiley Bone may've survived their previous run-ins with the giant mountain cat Roque Ja, but now they're about to be sacrificed by the stupid rat creatures. And while that's happening, the village is destroyed and Thorn bumps into an old friend. By Jeff Smith. **$2.95**

CAPTAIN AMERICA #3

MARVEL Tonight's main event: the Star-Spangled Avenger Captain America versus the criminal scumpot organization HYDRA. And if Cap survives the 15,000 HYDRA agents and the all-new character pulling their strings, he may just see the return of his former lover Sharon Carter, the Red Skull and possibly even...Nick Fury! By Mark Waid, Ron Garney and Bob Wiacek. **$1.99**

CHASE #2

DC COMICS She's a spunky detective named Cameron Chase who butters her bread with danger and the paranormal. He's a wacky computerized villain named the Construct. When the JLA takes down the Construct, a terrorist group takes a big interest in the villain's HQ. Now, Chase's off to explore the Construct's base—and she's gotta bring the Suicide Squad with her. By D. Curtis Johnson, J.H. Williams III and Mick Gray. Johnson says, "Considering that Chase's job means she brushes up against superheroes all the time, it's kind of ironic that she has a personal grudge against superheroes in general. As the series progresses, we'll be exploring more and more about why she feels so strongly about heroes." **$2.50**

BONE #31

CHASE #2

THE FLASH #135

GROO #1

CONCRETE: STRANGE ARMOR #2 (OF 5)

DARK HORSE Imagine having the mind of a sensitive man, the body of a four-lane highway and absolutely no willy to speak of. Pretty rough, huh? Well, that's what happens to Ron Lithgow when his brain's transplanted into a concrete alien body. The only real bright spot for Lithgow (now called Concrete) is the beautiful researcher named Maureen Vonnegut. But is she merely setting him up for a fall? By Paul Chadwick. **$2.95**

FANTASTIC FOUR #3

MARVEL Life is one unending torture session for the not-so-supervillain Red Ghost. He's a perpetual loser who's six hairs away from being as bald as Professor X. On the brighter side, he gets to hang around with super-apes who have much better powers than he does. On New Year's Eve, Ghost and his apes start tearin' up New York, and it's up to Mr. Fantastic to bring them down. By Scott Lobdell, Alan Davis and Mark Farmer. **$1.99**

THE FLASH #135

DC COMICS "Three of a Kind," Part 3 (of 3). Cruise into danger with the junior members of the JLA. Aboard a vacationing cruise liner, Flash, Green Lantern and Green Arrow must stop Heat Wave, Sonar and Hatchet from reviving the comatose Dr. Polaris. That, and get as far away from the freezing North Pole as humanly possible. By Grant Morrison, Mark Millar, Paul Ryan and John Nyberg. **$1.95**

GREEN LANTERN #96

DC COMICS "Three of a Kind," Part 1 (of 3).
Just sit right back and you'll read a tale
of three heroes and a doom-plagued ship
that took three villains from a tropic port—
they made the liner flip.
Now the heroes are stuck in the frozen North,
their great big liner's trash.
So who's gonna save us now, we wonder,
Green Lantern, Green Arrow or the Flash?
We hope it is the Flash.
This tale is brought to you, my friends,
by Ron Marz, Paul Pelletier and John Lowe
and our rhymes are losing speed, we fear,
so speedily we will go.

(By the way, this story continues in *Green Arrow* #130 and *The Flash* #135.) Also, check out *Green Lantern & Sentinel: Heart of Darkness* #1 (of 3), which tells of that hot green chick Jade's disappearance and teams GL Kyle Rayner (her lucky roommate) with original Lantern Alan Scott (her dad, who's now called Sentinel). By Marz, Pelletier and Dan Davis. **$1.95 EACH**

GROO #1 (OF 4)

DARK HORSE In days of old, when knights were bold and toilets weren't invented...there was Groo. Now, Groo's a massive magnet for trouble, and he ain't too bright. So when he becomes a super-genius, be afraid. Be very afraid. By Sergio Aragonés and Mark Evanier. Evanier says, "Groo is now in its fifth company and people ought to give up—people who haven't bought the comic ought to just go ahead [and buy it]. We're going to keep tracking them down...we're going to follow them from company to company until they buy it." For more Groo fun, check out this issue's "Strip Tease" on page 39. **$2.95**

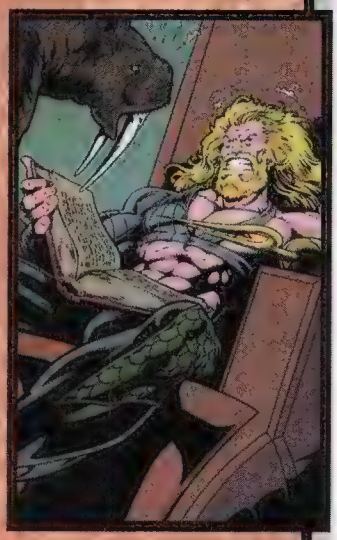
HITMAN #24

DC COMICS "Who Dares Wins," Part 2 (of 5). The local Bucketburger is a haven for indigestion, surliness and crinkle-cut fries. When Tommy Monaghan (Hitman) heads out for some greasy pleasure, he discovers that the evil "Men's Room" Louie has arranged for his speedy demise. Plus, there's a group of Gulf War commandos out for Tommy's scalp. Can't a psychotic hitman catch a break? By Garth Ennis, John McCrea and Garry Leach. **$2.25**

READ THIS BOOK!

AQUAMAN #42

DC COMICS It's good to be the king...unless you're Aquaman, of course. Y'see, the Council of Atlantis wants to vote on a new leader, but King Aquaman ain't too keen on that idea. So what we've got is one doozy of a power struggle, and wouldn't you know it, Aquaman's own son Koryak gets in the first bid as leader. But while Atlantis goes to the voting booths, the impudent punk Triton kills his seagod dad Poseidon, gaining his powers. So what's first on Triton's agenda? Destroying the one person who ever beat him, Aquaman. By Peter David, Jim Calafiore and P.L. Palmiotti. David says, "Basically, the entire issue is about the struggle for dominance. Aquaman versus his followers, Triton versus his father and Aquaman versus the Sea-Wolf, who himself is an incarnation of a struggle for dominance. And not only is Koryak going to make a run for the throne, but so is Garth, and Aquaman is going to find himself caught, rather interestingly, in the middle." **$1.95**



IRON MAN #2

MARVEL Tony Stark travels to Switzerland to help a beautiful countess with some "accounting problems." Yeah, right! Anyway, the Countess really wants Iron Man to beat up on the Ballista Soldiers, who're taking over her operation and secretly taking orders from the ring-slinging Mandarin. By Kurt Busiek, Sean Chen and Eric J. Cannon. **$1.99**

JLA #16

DC COMICS The JLA disbands! But fear not, 'cause the team comes back bigger than ever, stretching its roster to 14. Fourteen friggin' heroes on one team! Sure, you'd think that many heroes'd be enough to defeat the supercrud Prometheus, but remember, he's got all the original Leaguers' powers. So when Prometheus infiltrates the JLA's Watchtower and takes down Batman, does the League even stand a chance? Here's a hint: no. By Grant Morrison, Howard Porter and John Dell. **$1.95**

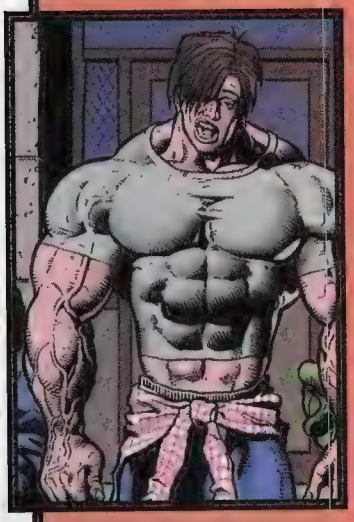
JLA: YEAR ONE #3 (OF 12)

DC COMICS In the beginning, there were five heroes and it was good—mostly. The JLA, in its first year of existence, was plagued by self-doubt, infighting and a lot of bad-ass superhuman bad guys. Here, the immortal Vandal Savage and his minions The Locus seek to destroy the League before the team can even begin to grasp Savage's secret plan. By Mark Waid, Brian Augustyn and Barry Kitson. **$1.95**

READ THIS BOOK!

MAJOR BUMMER #8

DC COMICS Louis Martin, spokesman for habitual laziness, has had many jobs in his lifetime: reluctant repairman, unwilling superhero, disinterested ice cream shop employee, you name it. But when you've got the muscles of Hercules, the brain of Einstein to the third power and the intestinal fortitude of Jell-O, there's only one job that can really satisfy you...say hello to Louis Martin, babysitter. By John Arcudi, Doug Mahnke and Tom Nguyen. Arcudi says, "Lou Martin babysits the brat from Hell. I really don't want to give away too much, but he's more than even a superhero babysitter can handle—or nearly as much as a superhero babysitter can handle. He's a problem child. There are also some further character developments and further straining between Francis [Dutton] and the rest of the group. Francis manages to further alienate everybody else in the group, if that's possible—and it is—and one of Lauren [Isley's] prophecies actually comes true." **$2.50**



JLA #16

NIGHTWING #18

KA-ZAR #11

MARVEL "Urban Jungle," Part 4 (of 4). It's gonna be a pitched (but extremely short), all-out (but extremely short), do-or-die (but *extremely* short) battle between the cosmic creepola Thanos and our hero Ka-Zar. At stake is not only the fate of the Savage Land, but the entire world as well. Ulp. By Mark Waid, Andy Kubert and Jesse Delperdang. Waid says, "It's pretty much a three-panel battle. Ka-Zar hits Thanos, Thanos hits Ka-Zar and Ka-Zar hits the ground. Ka-Zar is no match for Thanos physically. That means Ka-Zar has to use his mind to figure a way out of this mess. The clues are all there, we've laid the groundwork over the previous three issues and if you're paying attention, you can play along and figure out how to stop Thanos." **$1.99**

MAGE: THE HERO DEFINED #7

IMAGE Here goes: Kevin Matchstick (who possesses the power of King Arthur) and his buddies set a trap for the Sprigginflints; Kirby Hero meets up with his sister Athena and threatens to leave the group, which peeves Matchstick to no end; the bum Wally Ut shows up to utter a few incoherent remarks; and the Golem of Dzoxk wakes. Yep, just another typical day. By Matt Wagner and Jeromy Cox. **$2.50**

NIGHTWING #18

DC COMICS In the city that always reeks (Blüdhaven), Nightwing must save the freakish Man-Bat from the mercenary Deathstroke. Apparently, 'Stroke is being paid a heap o' money to capture his prey and turn him over to malcontents seeking to star the Man-Bat in some freakish sideshow. By Chuck Dixon, Scott McDaniel and Karl Story. **$1.95**

ONI DOUBLE FEATURE #1

ONI PRESS Back up, man—it's time to get whacked with those two miscreants Jay and Silent Bob (from "Clerks," "Mallrats" and "Chasing Amy") in a tale by Kevin Smith, writer and director of the aforementioned flicks. Also contributing to this book are Matt Wagner, Jacob and Arnold Pander, and Evan Dorkin. Smith, whose story is based on a throwaway comment in "Mallrats," says, "The character of Jay is running from [the mall cop] LaFours and he comments, 'Damn, that bastard's faster than Walt Flanagan's dog.' People who really dissect the movie always ask me what that meant. It was done as an in-joke—I just wanted to see the surprise on my friend Walter's [Flanagan] face when he heard that on the screen.

But so many people wanted to know what it meant, so I wrote the story to kind of explain their encounter with Walt Flanagan's dog." **MR $2.95**

POISON ELVES #31

SIRIUS Lusipher the killer elf is caught by police chief Vido's cunning trap and thrown into a Mandrathan slammer. Doing the hardest time there is, Lusipher's gonna have to rely on his buddy Jace and a mystery woman if he's ever breakin' free. By Drew Hayes. **$2.50**

PREACHER #35

VERTIGO/DC COMICS On the Highway to Hell, Jesse Custer makes a roadside stop to throw down with that major bad-ass the Saint of Killers. Toss in the evil Starr and his big guns, and the aptly named Valley of Death may (or may not) be able to contain the carnage when the bullets start a-flying. By Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon. And before he ever met Jesse Custer, Starr was a kick-butt anti-terrorist commando. Now learn how he rose through the ranks to be the sadistic head of the Grail in *Preacher Special: One Man's War*. By Ennis and Peter Snejbjerg. Both **MR**. ***PREACHER*** #35—**$2.50**; ***ONE MAN'S WAR*—$4.95**

QUANTUM AND WOODY #12

ACCLAIM While superheroes Quantum and Woody are trapped in each other's bodies, Woody learns his friend Quantum's most closely held secret. This ish also completes the duo's origin, revealing exactly what happened when their fathers took the long dirt-nap. By Christopher Priest, MD Bright and Greg Adams. **$2.50**

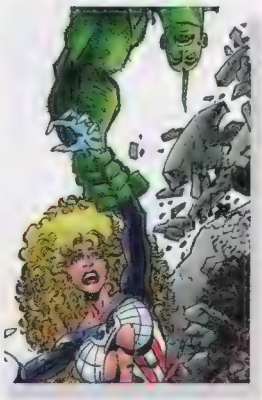
ROBIN #51

DC COMICS The second part of Robin's European vacation proves to be more dangerous than licking a sulfuric-acid popsicle. Robin's out to complete his martial-arts training, and he's gotta learn fast or die trying, as he trades blows with the deadly martial artist Lady Shiva for the life of the woman named Dava. By Chuck Dixon, Staz Johnson and Stan Woch. **$1.95**

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE #60

VERTIGO/DC COMICS "The Cannon," Part 4 (of 4). The lust for gold is the square root of all evil, at least for the Golden Age Sandman (a.k.a. Wesley Dodds). Sandman and the English enigma known as the Cannon hunt desperately to find the connection between the rarest coin in America and a series of gangland slayings. By Steven T. Seagle, Matt Wagner, Michael Lark and Richard Case. Seagle says, "It's one of the biggest action endings we've ever had. We just decided the way the story was unfolding, it needed to resolve in a big, big blowup. So it's Sandman, the Cannon, the mobsters, the counter-mobsters, the gold cartel and everybody in one big shoot-'em-up at the end." **MR $2.50**

QUANTUM AND WOODY #12



SAVAGE DRAGON #45

SAVAGE DRAGON #45

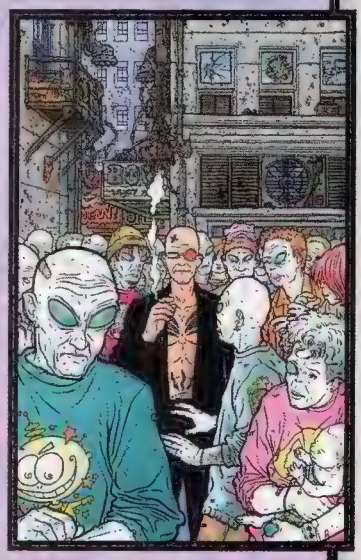
IMAGE Gods grapple in a titanic tussle that threatens to destroy the universe—including that rapscallion of a TV nerd, Steve Urkel.

PAPERBACK PICKS

Trade Paperbacks You Won't Wanna Miss

Bring on the Bad Guys (Marvel)
Evil is afoot! Marvel reprints some of its best villain stories in this 256-page behemoth looking at the origins of Doctor Doom, Mephisto, Green Goblin, Loki, Abomination and others. Each tale is accompanied by behind-the-scenes information and commentary from Stan "The Man" Lee. By Lee and various. **$24.99**

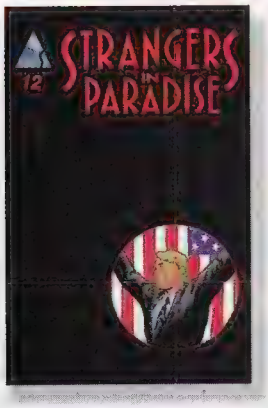
Collected Stray Bullets Volume 1 (El Capitán)
Grim and gritty crime is the order of the day as the first four issues of *Stray Bullets* are collected for the first time in paperback. Witness dumb thugs trying to get rid of corpses—and doing a bad job of it. See a young girl stab another kid with a pencil, and get kidnapped. It's guaranteed fun for the whole family. By David Lapham. **$11.95**



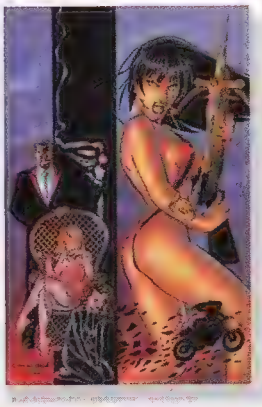
The Compleat Moonshadow (Vertigo/DC Comics)
Moonshadow and its sequel *Farewell Moonshadow* are collected in this huge 400-plus-page book. Young Moonshadow and his alien buddy Ira (a big fuzzy guy who smokes cigars, wears a funny hat and teaches his young friend about the facts of life) head out to the stars and into the heart of humanity. By J.M. DeMatteis and Jon J Muth. **MR $39.95**

Transmetropolitan: Back on the Street (Helix/DC) ▲
Spider Jerusalem has the story of the century when he writes about the Transients, humans who want to become aliens through cosmetic surgery. But in the process, Jerusalem gets caught between the Transients and the police in this paperback reprinting *Transmetropolitan* #1-#3. By Warren Ellis, Darick Robertson and various. **MR $7.95**

PICKS



STRANGERS IN PARADISE #12



VAMPIRELLA #3

Seems the Olympian Prince of Power Hercules and the Norse God of Thunder Thor have vowed to fight to the death, and the Savage Dragon and Smasher are caught smack-dab in the middle. By Erik Larsen. **$2.50**

STRANGERS IN PARADISE #12

ABSTRACT STUDIO Francine Peters tracks her best pal Katchoo to our nation's lovely capital, Washington, D.C. Former call girl Katchoo, reluctantly working for her former boss Darcy Parker, is out to besmirch the good name and rep of a respected politician. Unfortunately, the FBI might get to her first. Sex, politics and corruption in D.C.? Unheard of! By Terry Moore. **$2.75**

TERMINAL CITY #5 (OF 5)

VERTIGO/DC COMICS Terminal City is definitely a haven for the strange. Within its confines, window washer Cosmo Quinn battles an aerial graffiti artist; B.B. (another window washer) busts free from the Robot gangsters' captivity and rushes to rescue the sleepwalking Jezebel from certain doom; and someone kicks the bucket! By Dean Motter and Michael Lark. **MR $2.50**

THUNDERBOLTS #12

MARVEL Hold on to your socks, your friend's socks and your friends' friends' socks, because the Thunderbolts are finally gonna face the Avengers and Fantastic Four! Their leader Citizen V (who's really the evil Baron Zemo) is set to unleash his dastardly master plan, and the only one who can stop him is the newest Thunderbolt Jolt. By Kurt Busiek, Mark Bagley and Vince Russell. **$2.99**

VAMPIRELLA #3

HARRIS COMICS "Ascending Evil," Part 3 (of 3). Vampirella storms vampire central to kick butt and chew some gum. She's got a dangerous date with the master vampire, and Vampi's gonna have to stake him before her pal Dixie bites it. By Grant Morrison, Mark Millar, Amanda Conner and Jimmy Palmiotti. **$2.95**

YOUNG HEROES IN LOVE #10

DC COMICS Where's Frostbite and Bonfire? That's a good question, one the Young Heroes certainly *can't* answer. But while the duo's away, their teammates head to the jungles of South America to battle a giant monster named Grundo'mu. (And maybe do some of that sweet loving.) By Dan Raspler, Christopher Jones and Keith Champagne. **$1.95** W

Also shipping in January

Alpha Flight #8 (Marvel)
When the Weapon X files are opened by Department H, secrets about Wolverine threaten to surface. **$1.99**

Batman Books (DC Comics)
Is the hero Ragman responsible for a wave of hate crimes in Gotham City? *Batman* #552 holds the answer. Over in *Detective Comics* #722, a crook reveals his side of the story after being nabbed by Batman. **$1.95 each**

The Darkness #12 (Top Cow/Image)
Mob princess Appolonia Franchetti seeks to obtain the power of the Angelus. That, and kill Jackie Estacado, current wielder of the Darkness. **$2.50**

Deadpool #14 (Marvel)
What's worse than makin' a deal with the devil? The life-altering deal Deadpool makes this ish, that's what. **$1.99**

Fighting American: Rules of the Game #2 (Awesome)
Fighting American takes on the Spice Girls in the coolest video you...oh, sorry. He's just fightin' his wacky robot sidekick S.P.I.C.E. **$2.50**

Generation X #36 (Marvel)
Synch is gone and M's melded with her evil brother Emplate. So it's up to the Gen X kids to rescue 'em both. Definitely not a good thing. **$1.99**

Lady Death #1 (Chaos!)
Lady Death returns to Hell, only to face its queen, Levithia. **$2.95**

Spawn #70 (Todd McFarlane Productions/Image)
In Spawn Alley, detectives Sam and Twitch team with Spawn to face something very, very dead. **$1.95**

Spider-Man Books (Marvel)
Spidey's life takes a bad turn this month as he becomes the chief suspect in a murder. In *Sensational Spider-Man* #25, little Norman Osborn is kidnapped, and Spidey's chased by a slew of bounty hunters. The creepy Black Tarantula tries bringin' Spidey to justice in *Amazing Spider-Man* #432 and, after a protracted battle with Tarantula, the wall-crawler's hunted by Shotgun and the Punisher in *Peter Parker: Spider-Man* #89. And in *Spectacular Spider-Man* #255, the new Green Goblin raises...um...heck.
***Sensational, Spectacular*—$2.99; others—$1.99**

Star Wars Books (Dark Horse)
In *Star Wars: Crimson Empire* #2, the Crimson Guardsman Kir Kanos finds refuge with the Rebellion. Over in *Star Wars: X-Wing Rogue Squadron: Family Ties* #1, the Rogues have to fly a mission with the Empire's greatest pilot, Baron Fel. **$2.95 each**

Superman Books (DC Comics)
Obsession and Maxima vie for the love of Supermen Red and Blue in *Superman: The Man of Tomorrow* #10, while in *Action Comics* #742, Blue Supes fights a brand-new villain named Kirichitan. Sinister things are afoot in Gotham City in *Superman: The Man of Steel* #77, and Superman Red greets the Millennium Guard with closed fists, while Superman Blue scraps with the Black Crucible in *Superman* #133. **$1.95 each**

Uncanny X-Men #353 (Marvel)
While Rogue feels a burning need to use her powers, Joseph suffers through a major crisis. (Probably an *identity* crisis...) **$1.99**

Witchblade #20 (Top Cow/Image)
Wanna know the truth behind the death of Witchblade-wielder Sara Pezzini's dad? So does Sara. **$2.50**

Wolverine #122 (Marvel)
One last time, with enthusiasm: Wolverine vs. the White Ghost! **$1.99**

X-Men #73 (Marvel)
Professor X disappears, Maggott's fingered as the chief suspect in a murder and Marrow returns to the Morlock sewers. **$1.99**

Awesome Entertainment Presents:

The "Moore SUPREME for Me" Trivia Contest

Didja hear? Writer Alan Moore has signed on for another year on Awesome Entertainment's *Supreme* and Awesome wants you to join in the celebration by testing your Supreme intelligence!

What You Do:

Answer the following questions correctly and you could win the Awesome prizes below.

1. **In which issue did Supreme's adopted sister, Suprema, debut?**
2. **Name three villains who are stuck in the Hell of Mirrors.**
3. **Who is Supreme's arch enemy?**
4. **What city does Supreme currently call home?**
5. **What occupation does Supreme's alter ego have?**

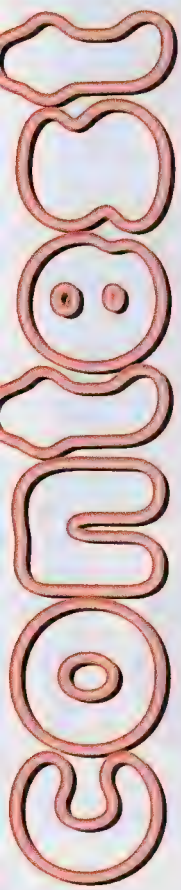
What You Can Win:

Grand Prize (1):

One Supremacist will win an original Alan Moore script from *Supreme*, a page of original art by *Supreme* artist Chris Sprouse, a *Supreme* #41 signed by Alan Moore, a copy of EVERY Awesome comic to date and every variant cover ever produced, one of each of the Awesome action figures ever made, a one-year subscription to ALL Awesome titles, an exclusive Member's Only pass to Awesome's new website at www.awesomecomics.com and an Awesome T-shirt.

First Prize (20):

Twenty Supremerinos will win a subscription to *Supreme* for an entire year, and an exclusive pass to the Members Only section of Awesome's website. Prizes Supreme!



Lawsome

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Awesome Entertainment, their immediate families and any so-called "comic fan" who hasn't read *Watchmen*. Get your ass in gear and read it, stupid. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card, and attach the form or card to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: "Moore Supreme for Me" Trivia Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Sayyy, anyone notice the similarities between Supreme and Superman? Just asking. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by February 27, 1998.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be randomly selected from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Winning entries will be selected on or about March 13, 1998.

For a list of winners, available after March 13, 1998, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: "Moore Supreme for Me" Winners List, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

This contest is sponsored by Awesome Entertainment.

AWESOME ENTERTAINMENT

Fill this out, attach your entry and put it in an envelope. Send it to: "Moore Supreme for Me" Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Deadline is February 27, 1998!

"Moore Supreme for Me" Entry Form

DEADLINE IS FEBRUARY 27, 1998!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

1 _____ 2 _____

3 _____ 4 _____ 5 _____

TRAILER PARK

***Wizard*'s column about Hollywood and TV and stuff like that**

22 SHOWS ORDERED FOR 'WITCHBLADE'

By Rob Allstetter

Top Cow Productions has officially made its first mark in the Hollywood pasture.

Sources have confirmed Warner Bros. Domestic Television Distribution has ordered 22 episodes of a live-action **"Witchblade"** television series. "Witchblade" will be produced by Oliver Stone's Illusion Entertainment, and will begin filming early in 1998 in Toronto for a fall start in syndication.

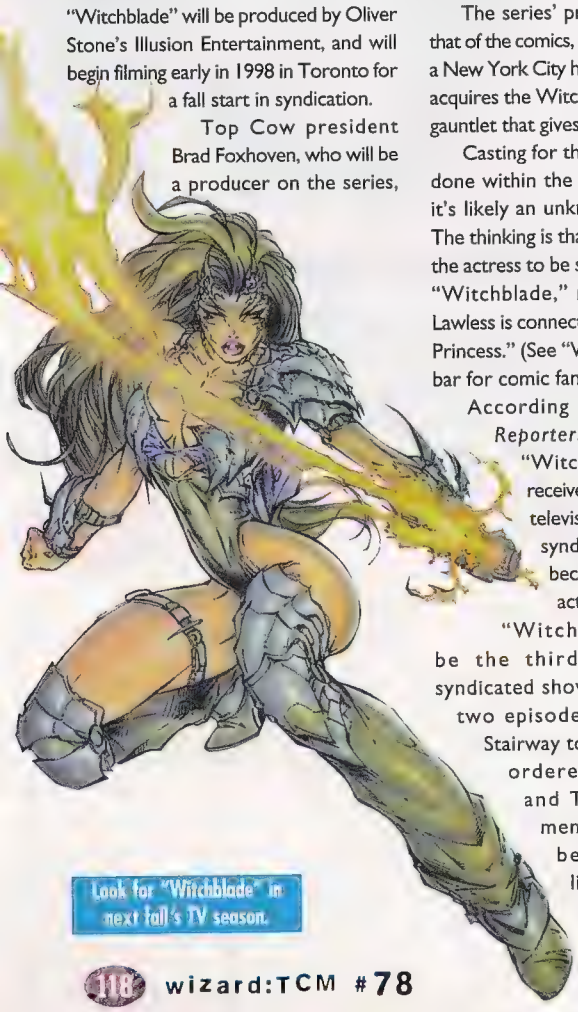
Top Cow president Brad Foxhoven, who will be a producer on the series, could not comment at press time, citing the need to wait until the deal's details were completed. Top Cow President Marc Silvestri will be executive producer, and David Wohl, who writes the *Witchblade* comic with Christina Z., will be a producer.

The series' premise should reflect that of the comics, which star Sara Pezzini, a New York City homicide detective who acquires the Witchblade, a supernatural gauntlet that gives her powers.

Casting for the lead role should be done within the month. Sources said it's likely an unknown would be cast. The thinking is that the producers want the actress to be strictly associated with "Witchblade," much the way Lucy Lawless is connected to "Xena: Warrior Princess." (See "Witchy Women" sidebar for comic fans' casting choices.)

According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, prospects of a "Witchblade" series have received strong reaction from television stations, despite a syndicated market that is becoming crowded in the action/adventure genre.

"Witchblade" will likely be the third comics-inspired syndicated show next fall. Twenty-two episodes of "The Crow—Stairway to Heaven" have been ordered (see next item), and Tribune Entertainment's "NightMan" has been a hit and will likely be renewed for a second season.



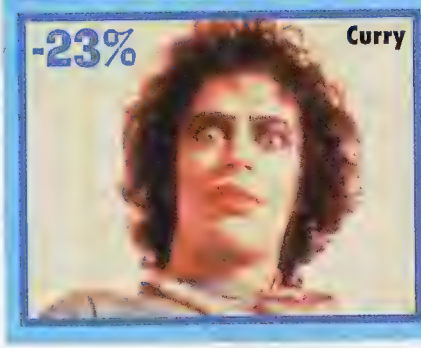
Look for "Witchblade" in next fall's TV season.

WITCHY WOMEN

Who do fans want to see play Witchblade? Through a poll on our Wizard World forum on America Online (Keyword: Wizard), the winner is **Yasmine Bleeth**, barely beating out her "Baywatch" co-star Carmen Electra. Elizabeth Hurley ("Austin Powers," 11%), Denise Richards ("Starship Troopers," 7%) and Teri Hatcher ("Lois & Clark," 5%) also got votes. But, hey—why not Tim Curry *à la* "The Rocky Horror Picture Show"? He wears a mean fishnet stocking.

Courtesy of Everett Collection

©Jeff Slocomb/Outline



Courtesy of Everett Collection

"The Crow" becomes a new TV show next fall, too.

CROW: THE TV SHOW

The Crow is flying to syndicated television next fall as well. A new series, "The Crow—Stairway to Heaven," will be produced by PolyGram Television, which acquired the rights from Pressman Film and has entered into a production arrangement with Alliance Communications Corporation for the series.

Twenty-two episodes will be produced, based on the original "The Crow" film from 1995, with Eric Draven, a brilliant young musician, and Shelly, the woman of his dreams, having their lives brutally taken from them. She ascends to Heaven, but he remains on Earth—a lost soul searching for a way to be reunited with her. Shelly is now Draven's guardian angel, each week guiding him to his next challenge. He seeks salvation by helping others, fighting for those who cannot fight for themselves. Through each act of justice, he is taken one step closer to his dream of reuniting with Shelly.

"The television series presents a distinctive point of view—it's the action hour with heart," said Bob Sanitsky, president of PolyGram Television. "The unique storyline and the rock 'n' roll soundtrack separate our show from the pack."

Pressman Film is also in development on "The Crow: 2037," the third feature film in the franchise, which will be directed by Rob Zombie of the rock band White Zombie.

At press time, casting had not taken place for either the third movie or the television series.

CAP GOES TO WAR FOR FOX

Captain America's about to throw his shield into the animation field. Saban Entertainment has begun work on a Captain America animated series that could begin as early as next September on the Fox Children's Network.

The show is just starting to take shape, but sources said that "Captain America" will be a period piece set during World War II. Will Meugniot, who produced about half of the "X-Men" episodes as well as the syndicated "ExoSquad" show, will be the producer for "Captain America."

The theme is consistent with Captain America's 1990s animated incarnations. Cap teamed with Logan in one of the final episodes of "X-Men" and also appeared in several episodes of "Spider-Man" during the "Six Forgotten Warriors" and "Secret Wars" story arcs. In each case, his primary villain was the Red Skull and he was portrayed as a World War II hero.

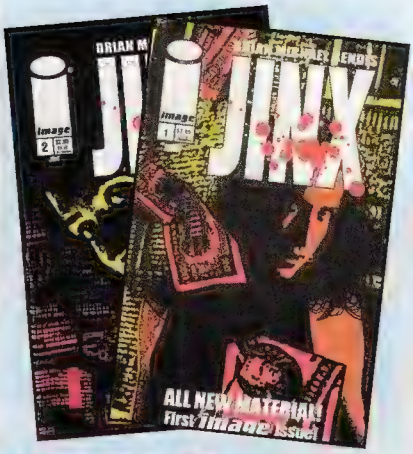
"Captain America" is part of a seven-year, four-series deal among Marvel, Fox and Saban. Saban also produced "X-Men" and the upcoming "Silver Surfer" series. Sources said **"The Avengers"** would be the next series developed.

A script for a live-action "Captain America" movie, perhaps the first film to be produced by Marvel Studios, is expected to be completed soon.

Set during World War II, "Captain America" is Marvel's next cartoon series.

'HULK' BAD GUYS LINED UP

There's no one for Bruce Banner yet—but casting has begun on **"Hulk,"** Universal Pictures' big-budget attempt



BENDING BENDIS' EAR

The best thing about having your comic book turned into a movie?

"It's *real* nice to have money in the bank," Brian Michael Bendis says, tongue-in-cheek.

Bendis is tightening up his script for "A.K.A. Goldfish," the first movie in his two-picture deal with Miramax, based on his acclaimed comic. The second film will be based on the crime comic's follow-up, *Jinx*, which is currently published by Image.

"The real thing about my comic is that the language of it is much more from the language of *film noir* than it is from the language of comics," Bendis says. "It is being adapted not as a comic book movie, but as a crime movie. Not to piss on comics, but that's what is going on."

Bendis says there will be changes from the comics—not so much changes to the essence of the material, but merely adapting it into another medium.

"The difference between comics and movies is so vast and yet so intertwined that you'll have to read the text book I'll write on the subject when I'm in my 70s," he says. "Which will be when I figure it all out."

Gary Fleder, who directed "Kiss the Girls" and "Things to Do in Denver When You're Dead," is in negotiations to direct "Goldfish." First, he'll helm another crime movie, "Thieves," with Jennifer Lopez.

"He's a real talent and has been very supportive of me for a while," Bendis says. "Everyone wants him to do it."

Don't even try to pry casting info out of Bendis—for now.

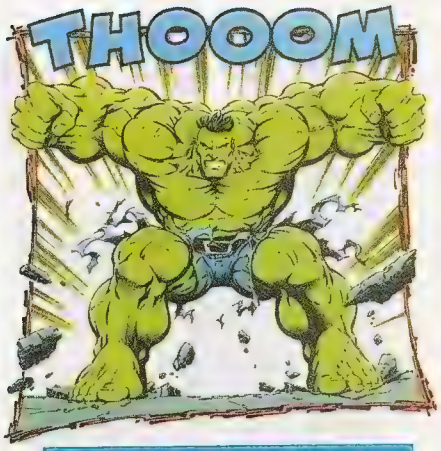
"I'm not one to talk about things that don't exist yet," he notes. "As soon as someone is attached, I won't shut up about it."

Bendis' favorite comic book turned into a movie?

"Believe it or not, 'The Rocketeer,'" Bendis says, "because Dave Stevens is a real inspiration. He took something immersed in films' glorious past, created a genius comic from it, then adapted it to film with class and grace."

And his least favorite?

"'Judge Dredd' is the worst piece of sh-- I have ever seen," he says. "The last Batman ['Batman & Robin'] was pretty gross, too." ■*RA*



ILM is in the "testing phase" of the Hulk film.

to bring Marvel's Green Goliath to the silver screen.

Gregory Sporleder and **Lynn Red Williams** have signed on to play two of the three mutated villains in the film, which is slated for a summer 1999 release. Jonathan Hensleigh wrote the script and will direct for the first time, with his wife, Gale Anne Hurd, producing.

Sporleder will play Novack, a convict headed for the electric chair who receives a last-minute reprieve along with two other convicts to be part of Bruce Banner's genetic experiments with gamma rays. These tests transform Novack into a being with heat abilities.

Sporleder's credits include "Grosse Pointe Blank," "The Rock" and "Renaissance Man."

Williams, who kicked butt as Jax in "Mortal Kombat: Annihilation," plays Deacon, another convict who transforms into a mutated insect creature. Williams, a former member of the NFL's San Diego Chargers, was chosen from 700 applicants for the "American Gladiators" athletic challenge series, and in his Gladiator identity of Sabre, became one of the show's most popular personalities.

Johnny Depp ("Edward Scissorhands") had been in discussions to play Banner, but word is he's not the only well-known actor in contention for the role. The lead should be named soon.

Universal is already working with effects house Industrial Light & Magic in pre-production on "Hulk." ILM has been in the "testing phase" of making what Hensleigh called "completely computer-generated" versions of the Hulk. There will be two different versions—one that stands at 9 feet and one that stands 12 feet.

At press time, the script was still being tweaked. Production on "Hulk" is expected to begin this spring in Arizona.

'GEN[13]' FINALLY ON THE WAY

You think putting out comics is time consuming? Nearly *three years* after starting work on the straight-to-video **"Gen[13]"** animated movie, writer/producer/director Kevin Altieri reports the film will finally be completed by the first of the year.

"It's not like the light at the end of the tunnel, it's like just being ejected from the tunnel," Altieri said. "It's like giving birth—and it's gonna be a big baby."

Altieri said Disney, which will distribute the film through its Hollywood Pictures, is very pleased with how "Gen[13]" is turning out and might release the movie in just a PG-13 version, forsaking a planned, edited PG version. If all goes well, a spring release looks likely.

Recent "Gen[13]" activities included a 65-piece orchestra scoring the film in Prague, The Czech Republic, and voice performers coming in to loop in final dialogue and match up grunts, etc., with the animation. Among the eclectic cast called in were Alicia Witt ("Cybill") as Fairchild, the Red Hot Chili Peppers' bassist extraordinaire Flea as Grunge and Mark Hamill as the villain Threshold.

On the set, Hamill found himself face-to-face with one of his musical idols. "I

TRAILER TRACKS

WINNER OF THE MONTH: Who'd have thought it? **"NightMan"** is apparently Marvel's first live-action TV hit of the 1990s, soaking in good syndication ratings. Hopefully, the series will make enough money so they won't keep running that same sequence every time Matt McColm's Johnny Domino puts on his NightMan costume.

Those duds, by the way, were made by KNB, the same folks who created the Spawn movie costume.

Albert Ortega

"NightMan": Marvel's surprise hit.

LOSER OF THE MONTH: Dark Horse's **"Timecop"** ran out of time so quickly on ABC that the network preempted what would have been the fifth and final show for a news special on Wall Street. "Unfortunately, we were canceled before folks had a chance to see what I feel were some of our strongest episodes," said Mark Verheiden, supervising producer. Oh, well, there's always the Sci-Fi

© 1994 Fox Children's Network, Inc.

Spidey loses out in "Secret Wars."

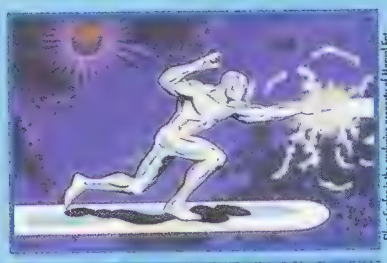
Channel, where all eight of the series' completed episodes will likely wind up.

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN: Writer/producer John Semper wanted to use several more characters than actually showed up in the "Secret Wars" episodes of **"Spider-Man."** Only **Storm** of the X-Men (who appeared in two earlier Spidey episodes) could be used because voice actress Iona Morris is Los Angeles-based; the rest of the cast is in Canada and would have been too costly to use again. The Incredible Hulk—and then She-Hulk—were no go because of the Hulk's UPN series; Semper wrote in the Lizard in their place.

The Fantastic Four and Iron Man did make the cut, despite their syndicated shows. Three-quarters of the FF featured new voices (only Quinton Flynn as the Human Torch returned); they wore Jim Lee-style costumes and the Thing was skinnier than his comics counterpart, with full-length jump-pants.

SILVER STREAK: The **Silver Surfer** will not be wearing trunk lines, like he used to in some of the older comics, for the upcoming Fox animated series. "We started with a little bit of that and we slowly axed it off," said Dale Hendrickson, the series' art director. "It was just stupid no matter how we drew it. We knew we might get some flak for that, and we initially we did comments from the network, but we kept bombarding them with the comics."

MIGHTY MARVEL UPDATE: No airdate has been set for the **"Nick Fury"** telefilm starring David Hasselhoff, but sources said Fox will likely broadcast it during February sweeps. . . . Early ratings for the second season of "The Incredible Hulk" animated series have been substantially better than those of the first season. No word yet if UPN



Silver Surfer is the exclusive property of Marvel Ent. Group, Inc.

Surfer goes nude.

The "Gen[13]" video is finally slated for March.

was dying to ask Flea for Jane's Addiction tickets, but how tacky is that?" Hamill recalled. "So I decided not to and just buy the tickets."

According to Altieri, "Gen[13]" could eventually become a TV series. "Disney definitely wants to do it, but we've been too busy concentrating on the movie," he said.

HAMILL SHINES UP 'BLACK PEARL'

Mark Hamill's done just about everything in show biz—from Luke Skywalker in "Star Wars" to Broadway to voice animation. Now, he wants to be a director.

The Black Pearl, the Dark Horse Comics series created and owned by Hamill and his cousin Eric Johnson, has been optioned for television and film by Rehme Productions. Hamill cautions it's just one step in bringing the story of quirky-loner-turned-tabloid-hero Luther Drake to the screen, but he's also excited about the potential of possibly directing the project.

"If I don't direct, I will be banned from the set!" he laughed. "I can't see anybody else who has the feel for the material like I do."

Hamill doesn't see "The Black Pearl" as a huge-budget blockbuster, preferring a "low-tech" approach.

"The constant in everything we've done with this is the fact that we play this in a very real world," he said. "Real in the sense that 'Fargo' seemed real. It's not set in some alternate universe; it's not meant to be in a heightened reality."

Detroit-based writer Rob Allstetter just can't wait for the Witchblade Slice-You-Up Playset.

will add to its existing 21 episodes or renew the series for a third season.

SUMMER BLOODIN': New Line Cinema has moved the release of **"Blade,"** the movie based on Marvel's vampire hunter, from Feb. 13 to Aug. 7. Screenwriter David Goyer was in good spirits after watching a rough cut of the film. "Wesley Snipes fans should be quite happy," Goyer said. "He kicks some serious butt."

QUOTATION MARKED: **Sandra Hess** on her role in the upcoming "Nick Fury" telefilm on Fox: "Viper is definitely mean. She doesn't stop at anything. She enjoys killing. She loves killing. She almost gets sexually excited by killing."

BE CAREFUL OUT THERE: Surfing the Internet can leave you in a bad wave. Reports on the **"Hulk"** movie on the Net have been based on a very early draft of the script, which is still being refined by writer/director Jonathan Hensleigh.

Karen Moskowitz/Fox

Hess: "Sexually excited" villain.

RUMOR MILL: Expect to hear some noise from Acclaim soon. **"Quantum & Woody"**—the television series?!? It could happen.

WINNING WITCH: ABC has renewed **"Sabrina, The Teenage Witch"** for not one, but *two* seasons. The second-year series, based on the Archie Comics character, is a top-10 show among kids.

Dom Cadette

"Sabrina": Two better than one.

SERIOUS COMEDY: **Rikki Rockett**, publisher of No Mercy Comics and drummer for the '80s glam band Poison, appeared on a November sweeps episode of Andrew Dice Clay's UPN sitcom "Hitz." Rockett played—What else?—a drummer. "Working on a television sitcom is a lot tougher to do than I ever thought," Rockett said. "However, director Ted Wass walked me through the parts, and Andrew treated me like a kid brother and gave me the confidence to pull it off."

Photo courtesy of Rita Hollingsworth

Rockett pulls it off.

ETC.: The Halloween special of **"South Park"** set a record for the best ratings in the history of cable network Comedy Central. The special, which aired Oct. 29, drew a 3.8 rating (2,665,000 viewers).... "Batman & Robin" star **George Clooney** was named "Sexiest Man Alive" for 1997 by *People* magazine. "Batman & Robin," a box-office disappointment, did reach the top of the home video sales and rental charts.... Upcoming episodes of **"The Anti-Gravity Room"** on the Sci-Fi Channel will focus on animation and on the international comics scene.... **Don Messick**, the voice-over artist who played Scooby-Doo, Boo Boo Bear from "Yogi Bear," Astro from "The Jetsons" and Dr. Benton Quest from "The Adventures of Jonny Quest," died on Oct. 24 of natural causes.... Fox has renewed **"King of the Hill"** through the 1998-99 season, the show's third.... Disney's animated **"Hercules"** movie will reach home video on Feb. 3.

CHARACTER PROFILE: Witchblade

BY MATTHEW BRADY

VITAL STATS

Real Name: Sara Pezzini
Age: Mid-20s
Height: 5' 9"
Weight: 125 lbs.
Hair Color: Brown
Eye Color: Brown
First Appearance: *Cyblade/Shi #1*
Titles Currently Appearing in: *Witchblade, Tales of the Witchblade*
Major Enemies: Kenneth Irons, Jackie Estacado, Ian Nottingham and Mephisto

ORIGIN

Throughout history, once in every generation, a woman is chosen to wear the Witchblade gauntlet, a weapon of incredible power and mysterious origins. For years, the Witchblade had gone without a bearer. Until recently.

Acting on a tip of suspicious activity, New York police detective Sara Pezzini and her partner Michael Yee infiltrated the Rialto Theater, where businessman and crimelord Kenneth Irons was hosting a tournament to see who among the assembled criminals could wear the Witchblade without being killed by it. Suitor after suitor tried to no avail.

But Pezzini and her partner were discovered and the assembled gangsters wounded Pezzini and killed Yee. Nearly dead, Pezzini reached out for anything to help her, and the Witchblade came to her, fitting itself over her right hand and healing her instantly. Revitalized, Pezzini fought her way out of the Rialto, making short work of the assembled thugs.

Following the incident, Pezzini tried to reject the gauntlet—which converts into a bracelet—but since it wouldn't leave its chosen "bearer," she eventually accepted her fate as the Witchblade's current vessel.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

Since gaining the Witchblade, Pezzini quickly found herself romanced by the intimidating Irons, who only wanted the Witchblade for himself. However, Irons' assistant Ian Nottingham found himself attracted to Pezzini as well—causing a triangle that would have dire complications.

During a pitched battle for control of the Witchblade, Nottingham turned on Irons—a move that killed Nottingham and defeated Irons. Pezzini prepared to take Irons to jail, but rather than face the humiliation and failure, Irons took his own life.

Pezzini has since run afoul of Mafia hitman Jackie Estacado, current possessor of the power known as the Darkness, sworn enemy of the Witchblade. Both Pezzini and Estacado immediately felt the intense hatred the Witchblade had for the hitman, especially when the weapon tried to kill him of its own accord. Pezzini barely managed to rein in the Witchblade, allowing Estacado to escape.

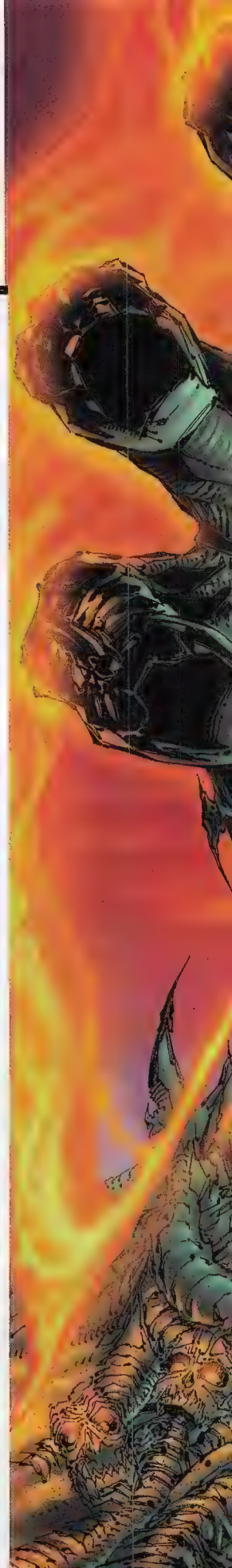
During the period of mob infighting due to Irons' death, Pezzini tracked down a mysterious serial killer, only to find that the killer was a former wife of Irons, who he'd mystically transformed so she could possess a fragment of the Witchblade. When confronted by Pezzini, the woman released control of her power-hungry aspect of the gauntlet, allowing it to almost consume Pezzini. At the last moment, however, Pezzini gained control of the aspect, and regained command of the Witchblade.

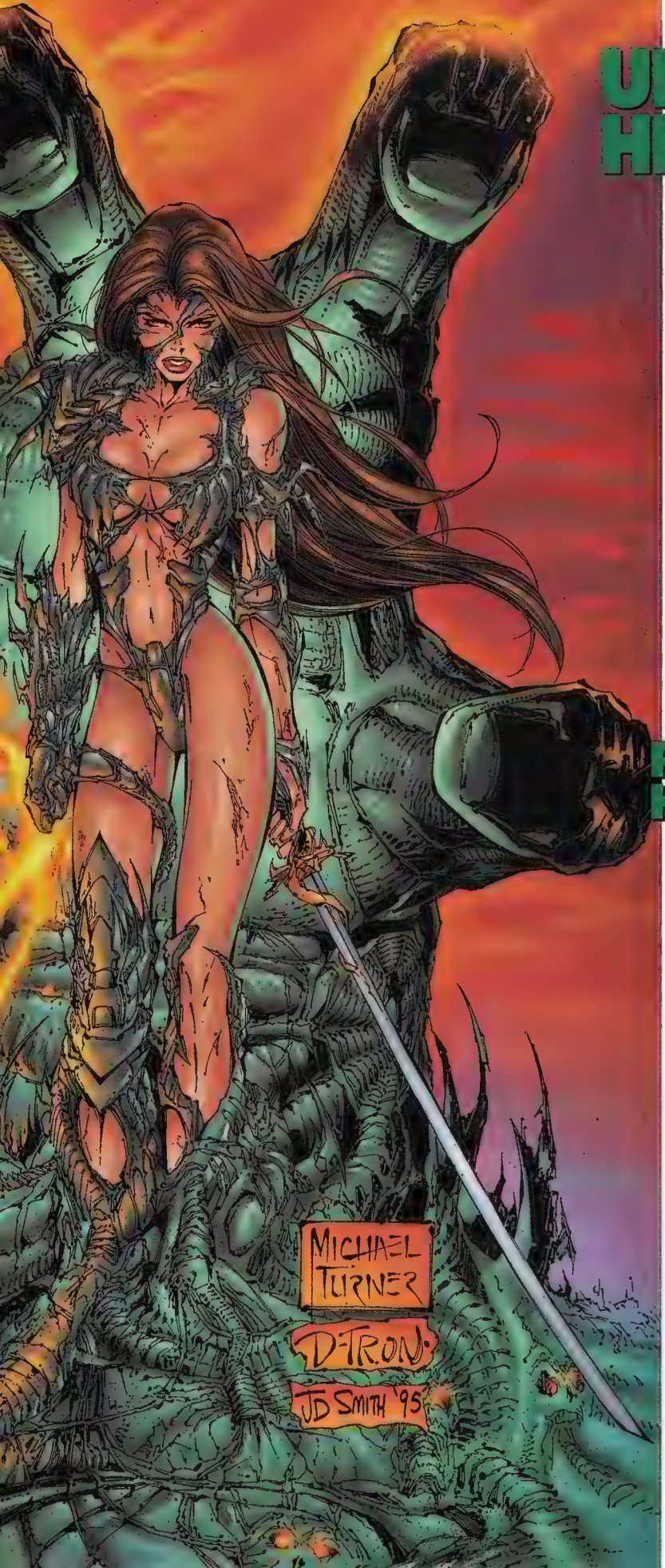
Due to Pezzini's recklessness and her unwillingness to officially explain her activities with the Witchblade, Pezzini was suspended from the force, pending a review of her performance. Suspended for barely an hour, Pezzini was recruited by Unit P of the Justice Department for a rescue mission in Brazil, during which she learned that Nottingham was still alive.

Before she could question Nottingham's reappearance, Pezzini was recalled to active duty following a brazen Yakuza attack on her precinct house that killed nearly half the police force. Pezzini's investigation led her once again to confront Estacado, as the two found themselves not only embroiled in the gang war, but also caught up in a battle between their respective powers, which seemed intent on annihilating one another despite the wishes of their bearers.

The larger war came to a violent, bloody climax when it was revealed that this latest outbreak of Yakuza/Mafia fighting was orchestrated by Nottingham himself, who used the chaos to wrest control of both the Darkness and the Witchblade from Estacado and Pezzini.

Now without the Witchblade, Pezzini must ask herself, does she want the Witchblade's power again...or should she just walk away?





UPCOMING HIGHLIGHTS

Throwing herself back into her work to forget about everything that has happened recently, Pezzini finds herself in the middle of a new mystery, a mystery that may just reveal how her father really died. Unfortunately for her, the investigation brings to light connections between her father, his former partner (and Pezzini's current boss) Joe Siry, Kenneth Irons, and the First Church of Holy Prosperity, which may be a front for something darker than Pezzini ever imagined.

Meanwhile, all the death during the Yakuza/Mafia war in the recent "Family Ties" story hasn't calmed down the gang war that much, as two-bit thugs keep trying to fill the vacuum left behind by Irons' departure. Pezzini, increasingly convinced that Irons is still alive somehow, has more than a few personal problems, as well—her current partner Jake has the hots for her, but she's growing more and more attracted to Nottingham, the current wearer of the Witchblade. Pezzini wants to know what he's been doing since his apparent death, but it's a secret he may not be too willing to share. Talk about your self-destructive relationships!

RECOMMENDED HIGHLIGHTS

Looking for some choice slices of Witchblade? Check out these picks by series writers David Wohl and Christina Z. Finding some of the individual issues may be tough, so be sure to look for the *Witchblade Collected Editions*, each of which collects two issues with a new cover.

- ***Witchblade* #1**—Aaaaand the kickoff! See how the whole ball of wax gets rolling as Pezzini first encounters the Witchblade, and gets a taste of its power. An integral part of the entire story, along with some solid art by Michael Turner.
- ***Witchblade* #18**—Part one of "Family Ties." Pezzini vs. Jackie vs. Nottingham vs. the Mafia vs. the Yakuza. Leeeeet's get ready to rummmmbllle! An absolute "killer" story with some of the coolest character interactions of the series so far.
- ***Tales of the Witchblade* #3**—In a future New York, a young detective needs help tracking down a murderer. His only ally? The current wearer of the Witchblade, a woman who may or may not be quite all there. Will the detective survive the investigation, or will he be the next victim?

North Carolina-based writer Matthew Brady tried wearing the Witchblade once, but after the regrettable incident with his nostril, he decided to give it up. For the record, he was scratching, not picking.

TOP 10 HEROES & VILLAINS OF THE MONTH

This list doesn't track the number of copies which a specific character sells each month. It doesn't pay attention to any kind of sales meter. This list is a roster of the 10 comic book characters with the strongest fan following—nothing more, nothing less.

1) WITCHBLADE

Awww, ain't dat cute? Witchblade am tired little girlie. Witchy-poo go sleepie-bye now.

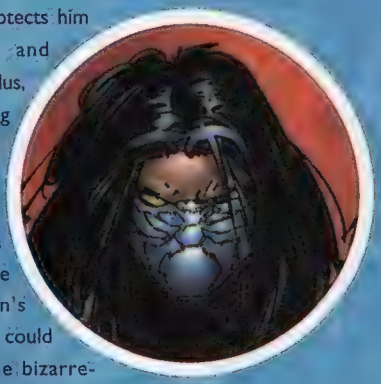
Yeah, well you'd probably be tired too if you were as busy as Ms. Sara Pezzini. After all, in addition to fighting for truth, justice and the Witchblade way (a full-time job in itself) and squeezing into form-fitting red dresses (gotta take her at least two hours a day to paint those damn things on), she's just finished up the two-month *Witchblade/Darkness* "Family Ties" crossover. Heck, she's so damn busy she needs *two* writers every month (David Wohl *and* Christina Z.) just to keep up. Take a nap, honey. You deserve it.

2) WOLVERINE

Now that Leinil F. Yu has taken over penciling *Wolverine*, two astonishing things have happened: First, fans have really taken to his style and are enjoying the *Wolverine* title even more than they probably have in the last two years. Second, Wolverine's hair has taken on the consistency of a Brillo pad. Seriously. You could turn Wolvie upside down (he's only 'bout 5-foot-4, y'know) and use his head to scrub even the nastiest caked-on grease from all your pots and pans. Wolvie now fights for mutant liberation *and* kitchen cleanliness. Now *that's* a hero! Let's see some wuss like Superman try that!

3) THE DARKNESS

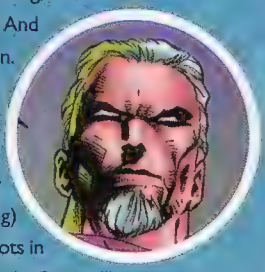
The greatest thing about Jackie Estacado, the bearer of The Darkness? He's got the *best* all-purpose costume! It covers his whole body, so it protects him from The Angelus and other bad-ass types. Plus, that face-plate thing protects him from bad smells and stuff, so he can go clean up Chernobyl or—if he's *really* brave—the Wizard Press men's room. And the plate could even double as some bizarre-looking hockey mask. Hey, he can go straight from fighting evil to the ice rink without having to change his clothes.



4) SPAWN

Eeeee-yow. Imagine this: You're the father of a 17-year-old girl. It's Prom Night for your Little Princess and here comes her date. He's got glowing green eyes, blistering, rotting meat for a head, about eleventeen-zillion teeth wedged in his skull and powers derived from Satan. He's Spawn. Quite naturally, you disapprove. But you know he's the star of stage, screen and comics, he's worth about a million dollars and he drives a Ferrari. And your daughter assures you he's a really good dancer. Take our advice: Let your little honey go to the Prom with the guy. Maybe she'll marry money.

5) BASTION



Much like with soap operas and pro wrestling, some people like to root for the bad guys. And they don't get much badder than Bastion. After all, this weasel-ass bastard tried to wax every mutant in existence *out* of existence. And the "Zero Tolerance" storyline he dominated was so popular (despite a suckhole anti-climax ending) that Marvel is doing *two* Bastion one-shots in 1998. Not too shabby for a bad guy. Maybe Bastion'll even star in a UPN action series with Hulk Hogan.

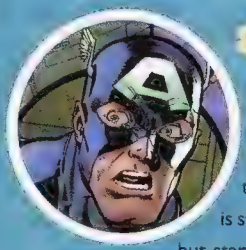
6) HULK

Speaking of Hulks, ol' Jade Jaws is riding a big wave o' popularity. He's drawn by the "Incredible" (Hoo-hah! Whatta pun!) Adam Kubert. He's just played a big role in the *Heroes Reborn: The Return* mini-series. He's getting a second title. Just goes ta show ya: That damn Kermit the Frog guy was wrong. It *is* easy being green. And if ya don't believe it, the Hulk will reach out and squash your skull like an overripe grape.

7) CABLE

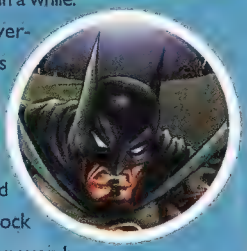
Okay, let's talk vision. Cable has that glowy-eye thing. Ya think he can see straight? Could he pass the eye test to get a driver's license? Like it's not bad enough that super-guys are always busting up prime real estate properties, now we gotta worry about them running us off the road in a 1981 Ford Fairmont?! Sheesh. Normal guys can't catch a break! Maybe Bastion will kill Cable and we won't have to worry 'bout him anymore.

8) CAPTAIN AMERICA



Hot damn, but it's good to be Cap these days! "Heroes Reborn" is over, the changing mask is over and Bucky is still dead! There ain't nothin' left to do but star in good old-fashioned comic book stories and carve through bad guys like a Ginsu knife through a tin can with a billion and 12 slobbering comic fans just waiting for your next issue. Must be a good feeling. Even better than a lifetime subscription to the Cookie of the Month Club.

9) BATMAN



Batman's gotta learn to smile once in a while. He's always got that I'll-smack-yer-grandma-in-the-face look on his kisser, but he's got a *lot* to smile about. He's got the coolest car in the DC Universe, his alter ego Bruce Wayne is richer than Donald Trump and he could probably knock Bat-boots with Selina Kyle whenever he wants. But still, he's the biggest superhero sourpuss ever. Hey, Bats! Turn that frown upside down. People will like you better.

10) SPIDER-MAN

"Spider-sense...tingling! Stupid-ass story ahead!" Yes indeedy, folks. The collective Spider-genius at Marvel Comics is immersing Webhead in some freakish plot where Spidey takes on four different Spidey identities. Now whereas this makes slightly more sense than voting Republican, it's still slightly stupider than taking a bath with a plugged-in-toaster. No wonder Spidey looks sad. Poor guy. So why's he still on this list? While fans may or may not like the story, they're still in love with Spidey the icon.

MORT OF THE MONTH

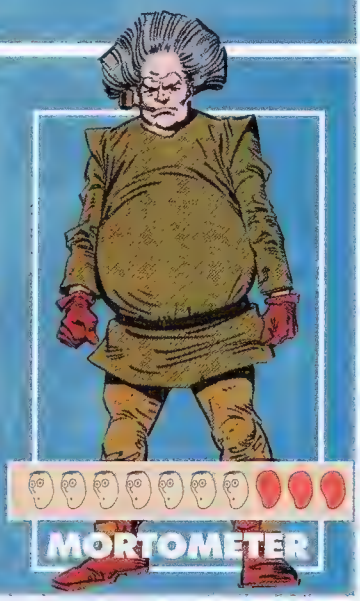
Now it's time to look at the lamest character of the month, or, as we like to call 'em, the Mort of the Month!

BLOW-HARD

This cross between a lard-butt appliance repairman and Gran'ma Ben from *Bone* had the incredible power to...create strong winds! Whether from his mouth or his ass, we don't know, but he did "blow through a pipe to focus his power" like he was some bargain-basement Popeye the friggin' Sailor Man.

Oh, yeah: He also had a wardrobe that looked like official Asgardian troll surplus, and despite his tough-guy mutant blowing power, died at the hands of common street thugs.

The only thing this Mort's got going for him? An appropriate name. Blow hard? Oh, yes he does.



The 5th Annual *Wizard* Fan Awards Ballot

OFFICIAL EXPLANATION!

Screw politics! It's time to flex your democratic muscles on something fun: Comics!

That's right, bucko. It's time for voting to begin for the 5th Annual *Wizard* Fan Awards, the awards that you—Yes, you!—the comic fans of the world decide!

Your votes will determine the winners of these prestigious awards! Nominees are already provided for you here, as determined through an America Online poll. Don't like the nominees? No sweat. Feel free to write in your own.

We encourage you to vote, but remember to follow these important rules and regulations:

1] Any material from the calendar year 1997 (comics, TV shows, whatever) is eligible.

2] You may vote for only one entry in any category. Multiple votes are all disqualified.

3] You don't have to vote for a listed nominee. Write-in candidates are perfectly acceptable.

4] You may send in only one ballot. All multiple ballots are disqualified.

5] Get your ballot in by February 27, 1998. Ballots postmarked after that date are null and void.

6] Send your ballot to:

Wizard Fan Awards
c/o Wizard Press
P.O. Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

7] You can photocopy a ballot if your friend wants to vote.

8] Keep reading *Wizard: The Comics Magazine* to see the results! Or better yet, swing by the Chicago ComiCon from July 17-19, 1998 where the *Wizard* Fan Awards ceremony will be held! All winners walk away with one of these nifty-swell award trophies by the sculpture and toy master himself: Clayburn Moore of Moore Creations!

EXAMPLE: IT'S LIKE THIS, FANBOY. JUST CHECK ONE ENTRY PER CATEGORY OR CHECK "WRITE-IN" AND WRITE SOMEONE IN. IT'S SO EASY, A WELL-TRAINED HAMSTER COULD DO IT.

FAVORITE WRITER

- ❑ Kurt Busiek
- ✔ Peter David
- ❑ Garth Ennis
- ❑ Grant Morrison
- ❑ Mark Waid
- ❑ write-in _____

ADVISORY: WE USED A OUIJA BOARD TO GET PETER DAVID'S NAME IN THIS EXAMPLE. AND IT'S JUST AN EXAMPLE. VOTE FOR WHOEVER THE HECK YOU WANT!

EXAMPLE

Write now and hustle up! Your deadline is February 27, 1998! Once again, that address is:

***Wizard* Fan Awards**
c/o Wizard Press
P.O. Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

Do it today. You'll be glad you did.

MANGA SCENE

A GUIDE TO JAPANESE COMICS AND ANIMATION BOTH PAST AND PRESENT

By Carl Gustav Horn

MUTANT MANGA MADNESS

X-Men join Spider-Man in Marvel's Manga Universe

The X-Men are turning Japanese in *X-Men: The Manga*.

America's favorite mutants are getting a new look and perspective. They're still the X-Men everyone knows and loves; it's just that they're a bit…different. A bit Japanese. Get ready for *X-Men: The Manga*.

As part of its Marvel Imports line, Marvel will be bringing the Japanese version of the X-Men to America's shores. The series, which debuts in January, features a line-up of the popular mutant team taken directly from Marvel's animated "X-Men" TV show—including Morph, a character created just for the TV series. In the first four issues, the X-Men will be going up against the likes of Sabretooth and Magneto.

The X-Men's introduction into Japan began in 1994, when the Fox TV animated "X-Men" series started airing in Japan—and not on Saturday mornings, either (as it did in the United States), but in prime time: Monday nights at 7 on TV Tokyo.

With the "X-Men" TV show already becoming familiar to Japanese anime audiences, it seemed like a perfect springboard for reaching Japanese manga audiences, and so publisher Ta-Ke Shobo acquired the rights from Marvel to develop manga based on the TV series, which ran in the monthly magazine *Comic Gamma*. *Gamma*'s stories, in turn, will provide the material for *X-Men: The Manga*.

X-Men: The Manga kicks off as the TV series did, with Jubilee, a 13-year-old girl visiting a shopping mall. In fine *X-Men* tradition, Jubilee turns out to be a mutant who's confused and frightened by her newly manifesting powers. At the mall, she runs away from bigoted bullies in an arcade, running into fellow shoppers the X-Men (earning curses from Rogue for spilling her purchases), and the metal arms of the mutant-hunting Sentinel robots! Naturally, the X-Men become involved with helping Jubilee against the mutant-hating extremists behind the Sentinels program (and since nothing screams "Japan" like a giant, kick-ass robot, it must be noted that Stan Lee and Jack Kirby were pretty damn hip to have conceived of the Sentinels way back with 1964's *X-Men* #14).

The initial artists for *X-Men: The Manga*, unlike *Spider-Man: The Manga*'s Ryoichi Ikegami (*Sanctuary*), are unknowns in America: Hiroshi Higuchi and Koji Yasue. The manga will have several different artists as it goes on, but they all merge manga with American comic sensibilities, says series

Stories from *X-Men: The Manga* will be based on the American "X-Men" TV show.

editor Glenn Greenberg.

The influence extends both ways, it seems. Joe Madureira, who, until recently, drew *Uncanny X-Men*, is well-known as a giant fan of manga. For Marvel's 1995 "Age of Apocalypse" storyline, he "cut" Rogue's hair so it looked just like heroine Major Kusanagi's from Masamune Shirow's *Ghost in the Shell*. Madureira also has ambitions beyond hairstyles: "I'd love to do an entire issue of *X-Men* in manga style, a dream in a total, insane manga style with the huge eyes, no noses and big, spiky hair. I love that stuff."

American fans may come to love that stuff, too. An undeniable part of the appeal of *X-Men: The Manga* is how, well, cute the characters look. The manga versions of li'l Jubilee, and even the trash-talkin' Rogue, are bound to make readers go, "Awwww!" The good old Japanese comic conventions are here, too: big eyes (on the female characters, anyway), speed lines, electricity crackling around angry people and characters razzing people by sticking out their tongues while pulling down their lower eyelids—an insult Jubilee flips on someone who crosses her. In manga, characters tend to look youthful, almost like children—a little more compact, a little shorter, a little more cartoony. The Cyclops in *X-Men: The Manga* looks like he could be the *American* Cyclops' son.

Cuteness will get you a long way, of course (just check out Dark Horse Comics' *Oh My Goddess!*). "But one thing that struck me as the series begins to develop," says Greenberg, "is the interesting contrast between the manga's cutesy characters and the detailed and realistic settings they're drawn in. Eventually, *X-Men: The Manga* contains powerful, moody images."

A fun title, *X-Men: The Manga* should give fans a fresh, stylistic approach to their favorite characters. For those who missed the "X-Men" animated series in the States, this manga represents a never-seen-before comics adaptation of the storyline. And after all the twists, turns, identity-exposings and timeslips American X-fans have dealt with (both in the X-comics and TV show) recently, it wouldn't be too much of a shock to find out the X-Men are really Japanese, would it?

Just kidding. W

California-based writer Carl Horn constantly has to keep control of his mutant power, which allows him to destroy any karaoke machine within seconds.

F.Y.I.

Like Marvel Imports' ongoing *Spider-Man: The Manga*, *X-Men: The Manga* will be a biweekly, black-and-white comic, with 32 pages per issue, although Greenberg notes the first two issues will be extra-long, and other issues may be similarly sized to avoid stopping the issue at an awkward place in the story. In Japan, there were 13 trade paperback collections (in Japanese, *tankobon*) of *X-Men: The Manga*, each running about 150 pages.

Greenberg notes that whether Marvel Imports brings over all of it to America depends on how the U.S. fans react to the books, but at two issues a month, there's enough material to last two-and-a-half years.

ANIME PICK OF THE MONTH

The Hakkenden

(Pioneer LDCA, subtitled/dubbed/bilingual laserdisc, 7 vols., 60 mins. each, $29.98/$24.98/$39.98 U.S., now available)

Japan's as much the land of samurai and shoguns as America is of cowboys and Indians; in this country, they still make cool Western epics like "Tombstone" and "Unforgiven," so where's all the epic samurai anime?

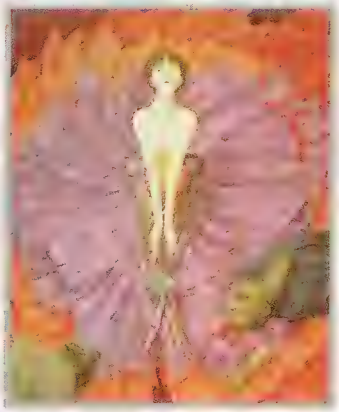
Well, look no further than "The Hakkenden," a sprawling, seven-hour samurai saga set during the violent days of 15th-century Japan. "The Hakkenden" tells the legend of eight warriors, who are strangers to each other, yet bound together by a exotic curse and destined to meet, one by one, and form a haunted, heroic band as they journey across the land on a road of revenge. Since "The Hakkenden" is based on a famous 19th-century Japanese novel written by an ex-samurai, viewers will get the real flavor of an age of high adventure—of ancient customs, treacherous sorcery, siege warfare, horrific executions and ritual suicide. And since it's adapted into anime by talents such as Hiroyuki Ochi ("Armitage III: Poly-Matrix") and Takashi Nakamura ("Akira"), fans get a visual picture by turns subtle, bizarre and bloody—a picture that truly gives the impression of another place and time.

MANGA PICKS OF THE MONTH

Must-read manga books shipping in January

Blade of the Immortal: Dreamsong #7 (of 7)

Dark Horse



Flowing artwork like nothing else in manga today coupled with a concerted attack on Japanese sword-myths marks Hiroaki Samura's *Blade of the Immortal*. In this conclusion to the "Dreamsong" story arc, the "ever-living" swordsman Manji teeters on the verge of death, and his fate lies with the unanswered question: Is it right to kill for vengeance? This title is for mature readers.

Doctor! #3

Studio Ironcat

From fangirl-queen manga creator Ippongi Bang comes a new story based in part on her own world travels. The wandering doctor finds himself a patient, suffering from high-altitude sickness and laid up in a mountain community. He's cared for by the beautiful Linda, but Linda herself is racing against time, carrying an extrauterine pregnancy that may cost both her life and the child's! Can the doctor recover and cure his own physician?

The Legend of Lemnear #1

CPM Comics

This is the new manga based on the fantasy adventure anime designed by Satoshi Urushihara (*Plastic Little*, *Chirality*). Written by Kinji Yoshimoto, director of "Plastic Little," *Lemnear* opens on the coming-of-age ceremony of the heroine of the title, when her village is brutally attacked by the lizardoid Vaizas. Swordsman Lemnear and thief Lian battle to hold them off, and find help from an unexpected source. *Lemnear* is for mature audiences.

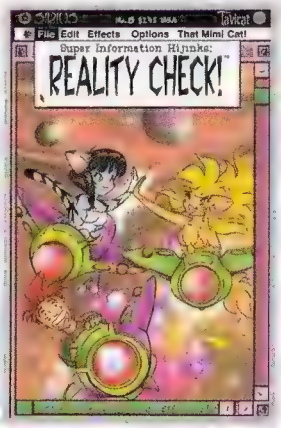
Manga Vizion (vol. 4) #1

Viz Comics

America's first Japanese-style monthly manga anthology magazine gets a new look! There's action in "Spriggan," as our hero teams up with an agent who's got a powered suit strangely similar to his own. There's retro-mystery in Kia Asamiya's (*Silent Möbius*) "Steam Detectives," as cute nurse Ling Ling faces off with a techno-kleptomaniac. And there's twisted medicine in "Black Jack," as the mystery practitioner tries to help a chef who's just lost both arms!

Reality Check!

Sirius Entertainment



It may be the most charming of the "American manga," and it's back after an eight-month hiatus! Influenced by the character stylings of Haruhiko Mikimoto (*Macross*, *Gunbuster*), *Reality Check* tells the story of the future "Virtual Internet" of Collin and his cat Catreece, who in virtual reality appears as a cute cat-girl. On the Net, no one knows you're really a cat! *Check* is drawn in full color.

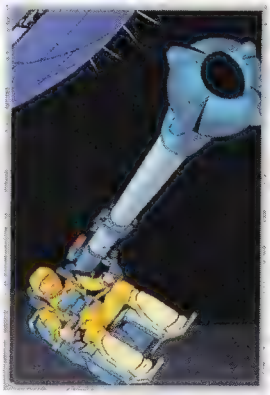
Robotech #6

Antarctic Press

Fred Perry, creator of the acclaimed *Gold Digger*, takes on an untold tale of the multi-generational Robotech saga in this color, bimonthly series. Under the shadow of the Second Robotech War, Angelo Dante and the 15th Alpha Tactical Armored Corps continue their search for their commander, Major Sterling, unaware that the Zentraedi enemy plans to use Sterling's part-alien heritage to turn her into a weapon to wipe out her own men!

The Two Faces Of Tomorrow #6 (of 13)

Dark Horse



The ultimate computer war game—man vs. super-mainframe "Spartacus"—continues. Dr. Dyer and his team of programmers attempt to keep a last measure of control over their experimental space station's power supply, and at this point, that means forgetting about the keyboards, and sending in the Marines! A bunch of remote-controlled engineering drones are no match for trained commandos...are they?

X/1999: Sonata

Viz Comics

Japan's female manga supergroup CLAMP continues its lavishly illustrated saga of millennial apocalypse in the collected graphic novel *Sonata*. Young Kamui, the most powerful psychic on Earth, is courted by different factions who foresee the coming apocalypse. Is Kamui truly a descendant of the ancient line of "shadow sacrifices"—those souls who suffer horribly to protect others from harm?

By Joyce M. Steel

Dealing Out Spawn Cards In January

Ever want to play poker or war with Spawn? Well, in January, you'll get your chance! WildStorm Productions stirs up a solid surprise for the new year, as it teams up with fan fave Todd McFarlane on a couple of Spawn projects. First up, if yer feelin' lucky, gather a buncha friends for a mean game of "Go Fish" with a brand-spankin' new deck of *Spawn Playing Cards*! Each card in the standard poker deck, which releases in January, features art by McFarlane and/or Greg Capullo (52 cards plus two jokers, suggested retail price $9.99). And, in late December comes the *Spawn Archives Chromium* cards, a metallic gallery of the comic's first 50 covers, with art by McFarlane and Capullo (50-card set, suggested retail $24.95).

MEANIE BABIES

Ready to ring in the new year to the sound of "Sphinx-ter" breakin' wind? Then you're ready to check out *Meanie Babies*, the first card set of 1998 from Comic Images. You think those cute, cuddly beanbag Beanie Babies are starting to make you sick? Wait'll you see "Upchuck the Duck" in action! Anyway, the 61-carder features art by John Pound, creator of the 700 *Garbage Pail Kids* cards that infested our society many years ago. Some of the real gems in the *Meanie Babies* set include E. Coli the Baby Bacteria, Snotty the Cow, Road Hog, Litters the Cat and Warty the Frog.

Chasing the set are six Chromium cards (one per every 18 packs or 1:18), 500 John Pound Autographed cards (random insertion) and three Original Sketch cards (random insertion). Plus, a parallel sticker set will be inserted at the rate of one per pack (six cards and one sticker per pack, suggested retail $1.49).

CLASSIC TV

Meanwhile, Inkworks is zoomin' back 30 years or so for its first set of '98, called *TV's Coolest Classics*. The 90-carder spotlights five of the niftiest '60s sitcoms: "The Brady Bunch," "The Andy Griffith Show," "The Beverly Hillbillies," "Hogan's Heroes" and "Get Smart." It's completely photographic, with card subsets including "The Dating Game," and "Good Times." The set also includes themed subsets like "Classic Quotes" (Which can't get any more classic than "Marcia, Marcia, MARCIA!") and "TV Dinners." Better yet, three cool stars have each agreed to autograph 600 cards for random insertion: Barbara Feldon (Agent 99, "Get Smart"), Susan Olsen (Cindy, "The Brady Bunch") and Donna Douglas (Elly May, "The Beverly Hillbillies").

Chasing the set are six "Memorable Moments" cards (1:11), six Dream Girls cards with holographic etching (1:20) and three Smell-o-Vision cards—definitely the best chase card of the year so far! One smells like Aunt Bea's cherry pie, another like Greg Brady's new car, and the last one smells like the Beverly Hillbillies' oil well (1:30) (eight cards per pack, suggested retail $1.99).

"WIDOW" STRIKES

Comin' outta the gate for '98, Bolt strikes big with two chiller bad-girl comic sets. *Widow* fans will find her debut set in card shops right this very minute, a 90-carder chock full o' new art, pinups, character and rookie cards. And cyber-angel Nira-X gets her first set in January—it's also a 90-carder featuring new art and a new short-story. Each set's chased by five foil enhanced cards (1:11), three autographed cards (1:16) and six Red Leather cards (1:64). No price for this set is available yet.

BABYLON 5 TAKE 4

Finally, rumor has it that "Babylon 5" fans can get a hold of the Season Four card set in January from Fleer/SkyBox. However, no details were available at press time.

The writer formerly known as Joyce Steel is currently on tour with the letter formerly known as "M."

"Hey, Mr. Liefeld...you okay?"
Spawn Archives Chromium

Pie...PIIIEEEEEEE!"
Babylon 5 Season Four

"Ahhhh...my codpiece is stuck! Help, HELP!"
TV's Coolest Classics

MegaCon '98 Presents:

The "So You Wanna Go to MegaCon?" Contest

You look like you could use a vacation. Howzabout a trip to sunny Florida? The folks at the Orlando MegaCon comic convention wanna send you there!

It's pretty simple: Fill in the entry form. Send it in. If we pick you, you go. If we don't, you get to sit home and watch "Nick Freno: Licensed Teacher." Here's what you could win: →

Grand Prize (1):

One mega-lucky winner will receive two (that's right you AND a chum can go) round-trip tickets to Orlando, hotel accommodations at the Orlando Marriott and two tickets to MegaCon '98 (happening March 13-15 at the Orlando Expo Center).

First Prize (10):

Ten not-as-well-traveled winners will receive the official MegaCon '98 program or poster autographed by all the major guests attending the convention!

CONTEST

This contest is sponsored by MegaCon '98.

MegaCon 98

Just fill this out and put it an envelope. Send to: "So You Wanna Go to MegaCon?" Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Deadline is February 13, 1998!

The Sky's the Legal

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Skyline Promotions, their immediate families and Pete the Greek, who says Florida's "Da waitin' room fer da Grim Reapa." Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: "So You Wanna Go to MegaCon?" Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Another Pete-ism: "Nice guys finish last. Wife an' kids suffer." Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by February 13, 1998.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be randomly selected from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Winning entries will be selected on or about February 20, 1998.

For a list of winners, available after February 20, 1998, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: "So You Wanna Go to MegaCon?" Winners List, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

"So You Wanna Go to MegaCon?" Entry Form

DEADLINE IS FEBRUARY 13, 1998!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. Here are the back issues burning up the charts in December.**

TOP 10 COMICS

1. JLA #2

WRITER: Grant Morrison
ARTISTS: Howard Porter and John Dell

Whoa, hey—what goes on here? How can *JLA* #2 outpace *JLA* #1? Is this the new math? The secondary market of DC's Bizarro World? Another stupid and futile plan from the French, the people who brought us the Maginot Line? Nah. It's just the way comic ordering works. It's like this, Poindexter: Lotsa people like to try out a new #1, so comic stores order bundles of 'em. But many people find they don't like a series after one issue, so they dump it. So comic stores order considerably fewer #2s. The *JLA* phenomenon? Most everyone stuck with it, but there were a lot less #2s ordered. Hence, "two" becomes "one." Film at 11. **LAST MONTH: 2**

2. WITCHBLADE #1

WRITERS: David Wohl, Brian Haberlin and Christina Z.
ARTISTS: Michael Turner and D-Tron

Testament to the fact that *Witchblade* #1 is one massive-ass book: The last time it *didn't* appear in our "Top 10 Comics" list was *Wizard* #59. How long ago was that? About 19 months ago, in July 1996, for those of you scoring at home. In this bygone day, Onslaught was still kicking mutant ass at Marvel, Superman was still a bachelor over at DC, and we actually had Shi on a *Wizard* cover. So through "Heroes Reborn," Supes marrying Lois Lane, and girlie covers, *Witchblade* #1 has remained constant. Heck, she's more reliable than the Maytag repairman. And she's got better hooters, too. **LAST MONTH: 3**

3. JLA #1

WRITER: Grant Morrison
ARTISTS: Howard Porter and John Dell

NUMBER THREE

Oh, yeah. Even though *JLA* #1 got its lunch handed to it by little brother #2 this month, it's *still* more popular than Preparation H at an old-folks home. So why is this title the phenomenon that it is? There are many theories: Some point to the all-star character line-up. Some would champion writer Grant Morrison's unusual bent on superheroes as key to the book's popularity. Some think the ink in the pages is laced with LSD and people are addicted to buying it. Hey, we never said these theories were any good. **LAST MONTH: 1**

NUMBER FOUR

4. THE DARKNESS #1

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTISTS: Marc Silvestri and Batt

Near as we can figger, three things make *The Darkness* #1 a big-time book. First is the dark, sick, hyperviolent humor of writer Garth Ennis. Second is the fact that artist Marc Silvestri is cranking out what is arguably the best work of his career on this title. Third is the subconscious fear of ol' Darkie himself, Jackie Estacado. See, Jackie's both a supercharged, superpowered superfreak *and* a mob hitman. So people think, maybe they don't buy the book, maybe Jackie makes them an offer they can't refuse. Better to be on the safe side. **LAST MONTH: 4**

NUMBER FIVE

5. HEROES REBORN: THE RETURN #1

WRITER: Peter David
ARTISTS: Salvador Larroca and Art Thibert

Yowza! We all knew that "Heroes Return" was gonna be the event of the year, right? And we all knew it started here, right? And we all knew that Peter David was a *mucho*-beloved writer and Salvador Larroca was a talented up-and-coming artist, right? And every comic store from Walla Walla, Wash., to Frostproof, Fla., knew this too and ordered a kajillion copies, right? And it still sold out, like, instantly and became one of the top back-issue movers only two weeks after release, right? Right! **LAST MONTH: NOT RATED**

6. BATMAN: THE LONG HALLOWEEN #1

WRITER: Jeph Loeb
ARTIST: Tim Sale

Check this: Writer Joseph P. Loeb III, in addition to being a comic-booky kinda guy, is also a movie screenwriter. He did that Schwarzenegger flick "Commando" and the upcoming Howie Long action flick "Firestorm." So we figger *Bats: The Long Halloween* oughta be made into a movie. Only we gotta keep it outta the hands of both Joel Schumacher *and* Oliver Stone. Otherwise, Batman would hunt down serial killer Holiday on ice skates, and Holiday would turn out to be just the pawn of some bizarre Cuba/CIA conspiracy. That could get bad. **LAST MONTH: 6**

NUMBER SIX

NUMBER SEVEN

7. DARKCHYLDE #1

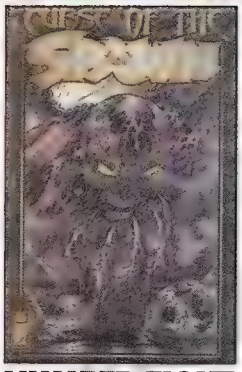
WRITER: Randy Queen
ARTISTS: Randy Queen, Jason Gorder and Marlo Alquiza

There's something wrong here! Something's *very* wrong here! Y'see, *Darkchylde* is quite the back-issue mover, despite the fact (or maybe due to the fact) that THERE ARE NEVER ANY NEW ISSUES OUT! Look it up: *Darkchylde* has been around for nearly two years, and in that time, a whopping *five* issues have appeared. That ain't a lot. Hey, people dig Randy Queen's gorgeous art. They identify with the "underdog" story of Ariel Chylde. Just think about where this book could be if it came out more often. **LAST MONTH: 5**

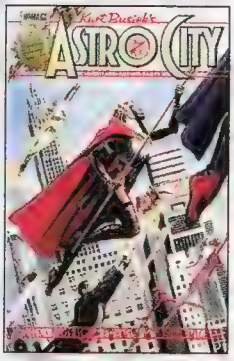
8. CURSE OF THE SPAWN #1

WRITER: Alan McElroy
ARTISTS: Dwayne Turner and Danny Miki

So let's say you're Todd McFarlane. Now, in addition to having Wayne Gretzky's All-Star hockey jersey, Madonna's bustier (Hubba hubba!) and a billion bucks, you've also got this character called Spawn. So how do you transform your billion bucks into *two* billion? Well, a step in the right direction is launching a Spawn spinoff title called...ohhhh, we dunno. Maybe "Curse of the Spawn"? Yeah, that's the ticket. And since everything Spawn is snatched up by collectors coast to coast, you're well on your way to that two billion. Congratulations. **LAST MONTH: 9**



NUMBER EIGHT



NUMBER NINE

9. ASTRO CITY (VOL. 2) #1

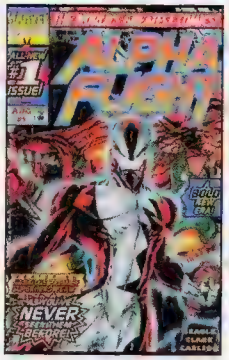
WRITER: Kurt Busiek
ARTIST: Brent Anderson

The star of *Astro City* is...Astro City. Really. Don't get us wrong—Kurt Busiek is a very talented writer, Brent Anderson is an amazingly underrated artist, and Alex Ross cooks up the most drop-dead-gorgeous covers you'll ever see. But the thing that sells the series is the "everyman" concept. Heck, this here issue tells the story of an everyday family who just moved to Astro City, and a superhero battle with gods is just *background* material. It's a different concept for comics, and ya know what? It works. **LAST MONTH: 7**

10. ALPHA FLIGHT #1

WRITER: Steven T. Seagle
ARTISTS: Scott Clark and Chris Carlson

Canada has given the world lots of good, like Dudley Do-Right, the McKenzie Brothers and the rock trio Rush. They've also given the world lots of bad: the "Alberta Clipper" weather pattern that dumps snow on the U.S., that crappy $2 coin and deathly boring Anne Murray music. Tipping the scales in Canada's favor: Alpha Flight! The new series is pretty darned good and has been well-received by fans. Hey, not bad for a bunch of guys who once had a character called "Smart Alec" in their ranks. **LAST MONTH: 10**



NUMBER TEN

THE NEXT TEN

THE NEXT 10 HOTTEST BOOKS AND THE COMPANIES THAT MAKE THEM

11. RESURRECTION MAN #1 DC
12. HITMAN #1 DC
13. JLA #3 DC
14. NIGHTWING (REG. SERIES) #1 DC
15. UNKNOWN SOLDIER #1 VERTIGO/DC
16. WITCHBLADE #2 TOP COW/IMAGE
17. THUNDERBOLTS #1 MARVEL
18. THE DARKNESS #2 TOP COW/IMAGE
19. DARKCHYLDE #2 MAXIMUM
20. HEROES REBORN: THE RETURN #2 MARVEL

COMIC MARKET NEWS AND SUCH · By Lars Pearson

VARIANT DEBATE HEATS UP!

They're more plentiful than dead bodies piled around Wolverine and they leave more question marks than the Riddler.

They're variant covers, and they're brought to the forefront again this month with the release of Top Cow's *The Darkness* #11, shipping with 11 different covers to celebrate the return of writer Garth Ennis.

The Darkness #11 sold into stores incredibly well, but the question is asked more and more: Are variants a good thing for collectors?

Variant covers: good or evil?

Well, They Sell Like Crazy

Since many readers buy every possible comic from their favorite series, it's easy to see why publishers do variants: They sell more. With its 11 covers, *The Darkness* #11 more than *tripled* its usual monthly sale amount. Marvel Comics now does variants for all #2 issues of new monthlies, which slows the normal sales hit a book takes with its second issue.

And, to be fair, the variety of multiple covers can be cool. Kate Sherwood, director of marketing at Top Cow, says, "If someone like [*Darkness* artist] Marc Silvestri drew an alternate cover for *Witchblade*, I would say in that case, the fan might want that if that was the only way to get Silvestri *Witchblade* art." Variants provide a choice to consumers, which, ultimately, is kinda nice to have.

There is a Dark Side, Though

Can variants be bad? Some professionals say yes.

A lot hinges on reader satisfaction. With the purchase of two variant covers, fans shell out double the dough for what is essentially one comic, then immediately file away one copy without having read a single line. Amount of actual time spent being entertained: near zero. As Bob Wayne, director of direct market sales at DC Comics, puts it, variants can spell "a short-term increase in sales at the expense of the customer's ultimate goodwill."

Thus, DC has consciously decided not to do variants, says Richard Bruning, VP/creative director at DC. "We're aware that some people feel compelled to buy things, to some degree out of an obsession to have them. We're conscious of it and we find it distasteful to play to that." DC does occasionally print less expensive Newsstand Editions for its Collector's Edition comics, such as the recent *Batman* #550, but these are not technically variants.

Bob Martin, owner of Adventures in Comics & Games in Carmichael, Calif., also worries that variants drain readers from other titles. "It takes away from a new book readers might want to read because, dog-gone it, they gotta have this variant. It takes away from a guy doing a good book who needs the support."

But, Hot-Dammit, They're Huge!

Variants are *the* market phenomenon these days. *Darkchylde* #1's variants have fueled the book's success. And the 13 *Gen*^{13} #1 variants from 1995 are still huge. But how long will readers support such books? The overall reaction seems to be that they'll keep buying variants…for a while.

"Will I keep buying them?" asks comic buyer Jennifer Ness of Anaheim, Calif. "If it's from a series I like, hell, yes. But sometimes it burns me to do it. When I get all the variants on something, I feel a breath of relief more than actual happiness."

Even Sherwood, who helped decide to do the *Darkness* #11 variants, agrees variants aren't always popular. "As a buyer, I would look at it sometimes as, 'Oh, my God, this is one more thing I have to buy to have everything.' But once in a while, I think they're very cool."

Either way, variants seem to have a growing number of fans…and a growing number of enemies. As the savior of many companies—and some would say the bane of many readers' wallets—perhaps only one thing about variants is certain: They rule the market today and they ain't gonna go away anytime soon.

'MORE THAN MORTAL' MOVES!

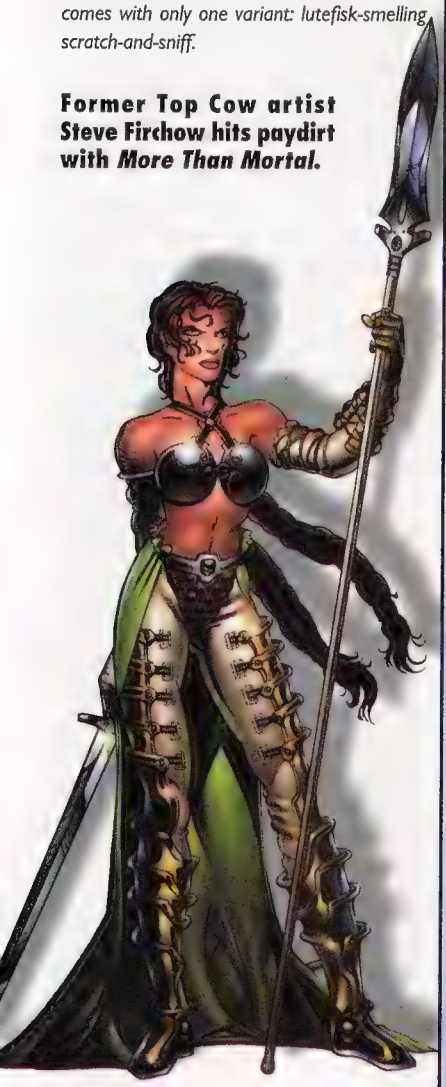
It looks like a Top Cow book. It smells like a Top Cow book. And Liar Comics' *More Than Mortal* is quickly becoming a cash-cow book on the back-issue market.

Top Cow has pioneered a new age of fantasy comics, and Liar's *More Than Mortal*, with a tale set in medieval Ireland, is riding the wave in more ways than one. Ex-Top Cow artist Steve Firchow handles the *Mortal* penciling and inking chores, and *Cyberforce* inker Joe Weems helps out on covers.

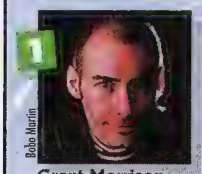
Nobody'd heard of Liar Comics when *MTM* was released, so only 17,500 copies of #1 were made, and they sold out almost instantly. The series is out to a hot start, but will this continue and the series be immortalized? That depends on whether fans stay with this series or decide their fantasy need is best fulfilled elsewhere. But either way, it's a big win for a new publisher.

Wizard *Price Guide Manager Lars Pearson comes with only one variant: lutefisk-smelling scratch-and-sniff.*

Former Top Cow artist Steve Firchow hits paydirt with *More Than Mortal*.

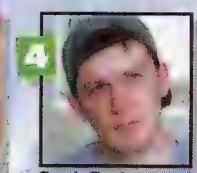


Wizard's Top 10 Writers

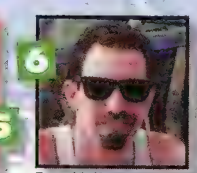

Bobo Martin
1 **Grant Morrison**
JLA, The Invisibles

Paul Schiraldi
2 **Mark Waid**
Ka-Zar, Captain America

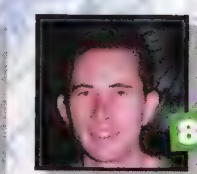
Paul Schiraldi
3 **Peter David**
Hulk, Aquaman

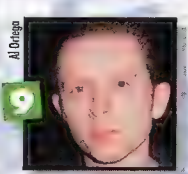

4 **Garth Ennis**
Preacher, Hitman

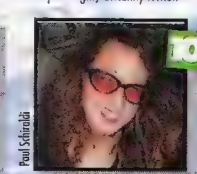
Paul Schiraldi
5 **Kurt Busiek**
Astro City, Avengers


6 **Joe Kelly**
Deadpool, X-Men

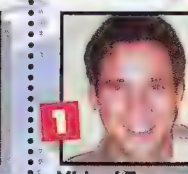
J. Schuyler
7 **Scott Lobdell**
Fantastic Four


8 **Steven T. Seagle**
Alpha Flight, Uncanny X-Men

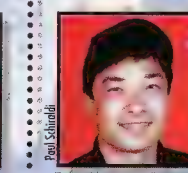

Al Ortega
9 **James Robinson**
Starman


Paul Schiraldi
10 **Christina Z.**
Witchblade

Wizard's Top 10 Artists*

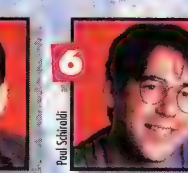

1 **Michael Turner**
Witchblade

Paul Schiraldi
2 **Joe Madureira**
upcoming: *Battle Chasers*


Paul Schiraldi
3 **Jim Lee**
Divine Right

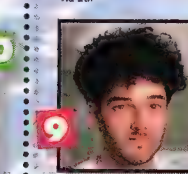
Jim McHugh
4 **Marc Silvestri**
The Darkness

Paul Schiraldi
5 **Alex Ross**
Uncle Sam


Paul Schiraldi
6 **Adam Kubert**
Incredible Hulk

C. Blankenhorn
7 **Andy Kubert**
Ka-Zar

Al Ortega
8 **Carlos Pacheco**
X-Men


9 **Chris Bachalo**
Uncanny X-Men

Al Ortega
10 **J. Scott Campbell**
upcoming: *Danger Girl*

***Pencilers and painters**
***Wizard*'s Top 10 Professionals lists are derived from a nationwide retailer survey.**

BURIED TREASURE

SECRET ORIGINS #46

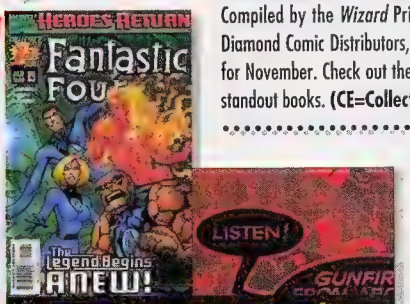
Tied in knots wondering how sales-scorching *JLA* writer Grant Morrison would do the origin of the JLA? Well, be bowel-twisted no more! Morrison wrote that story *eight years ago*—in the pages of *Secret Origins* (2nd series) #46.

The story's a "Year One" type of tale about the team's original mountain headquarters. And if Morrison's immense popularity and the ongoing juggernaut of the JLA franchise wasn't enough to pique your interest in this puppy, then keep in mind that legendary Superman artist Curt Swan drew the story, too, so both new and old JLA freaks will freak when they find out about his one. Start digging through those quarter bins! ■ *LP*

WIZARD TOP 100

The highest-ordered comic books for the month of NOVEMBER.

Compiled by the *Wizard* Price Guide staff, and working off the data supplied by Diamond Comic Distributors, the following is a listing of the highest-ordered comics for November. Check out the column on the right for an explanation of this month's standout books. **(CE=Collector's Edition)**



1. Fantastic Four #1 (Marvel)
2. Captain America #1 (Marvel)
3. Uncanny X-Men #351 (Marvel)
4. Spawn #68 (McFarlane/Image)
5. X-Men #71 (Marvel)
6. Wolverine #120 (Marvel)
7. JLA #14 (DC)
8. Witchblade #19 (Top Cow/Image)
9. The Darkness #10 (Top Cow/Image)
10. Curse of the Spawn #15 (McFarlane/Image)
11. JLA: Year One #1 (DC)
12. Generation X #34 (Marvel)
13. JLA: Paradise Lost #1 (DC)
14. Cable #50 (Marvel)
15. Wolverine '97 (Marvel)
16. Wolverine: Days of Future Past #2 (Marvel)
17. X-Man #34 (Marvel)
18. X-Force #73 (Marvel)
19. X-Factor #141 (Marvel)
20. Incredible Hulk #460 (Marvel)
21. Ascension #3 (Top Cow/Image)
22. Divine Right #3 (WildStorm/Image)
23. Uncle Sam #1 (Vertigo/DC)
24. Amazing Spider-Man #430 (Marvel)
25. Excalibur #116 (Marvel)
26. KISS: The Psycho Circus #5 (McFarlane/Image)
27. Peter Parker: Spider-Man #87 (Marvel)
28. Superman: The Man of Steel #75 (DC)
29. WildCORE #1 (WildStorm/Image)
30. Spectacular Spider-Man #253 (Marvel)
31. Alpha Flight #6 (Marvel)
32. Superman #131 (DC)
33. Batman #550 CE (DC)
34. New Mutants #3 (Marvel)
35. Action Comics #741 (DC)
36. Bishop: Xavier's Security Enforcer #1 (Marvel)
37. Adventures of Superman #554 (DC)
38. Sensational Spider-Man #23 (Marvel)
39. Deadpool #12 (Marvel)
40. Unlimited Access #2 (Marvel)
41. Xena: Warrior Princess #1 CE (Topps)
42. Detective Comics #717 (DC)
43. The Tenth #3 (Image)
44. Astro City (vol. 2) #12 (Homage/Image)
45. Thunderbolts #10 (Marvel)
46. Green Lantern #94 (DC)
47. Preacher #33 (Vertigo/DC)
48. Batman/Predator III: Blood Ties #3 (DC)
49. Voodoo #1 (WildStorm/Image)
50. Kitty Pryde: Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D. #2 (Marvel)
51. Gen^{13} Bootleg #13 (WildStorm/Image)
52. Nightwing #16 (DC)
53. Flash #133 (DC)
54. Superman Secret Files #1 (DC)
55. Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #102 (DC)
56. Supergirl #17 (DC)
57. Star Wars: The Last Command #1 (Dark Horse)
58. Gen^{13} Interactive #2 (WildStorm/Image)
59. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #70 (DC)
60. X-Files #36 (Topps)
61. Moon Knight #1 (Marvel)
62. Vampirella: Ascending Evil #1 CE (Harris)
63. Spider Man: The Venom Agenda (Marvel)
64. Wonder Woman #129 (DC)
65. Catwoman #53 (DC)
66. Quicksilver #3 (Marvel)
67. Ka-Zar #9 (Marvel)
68. Maverick #5 (Marvel)
69. Neil Gaiman & Charles Vess' Stardust #2 (Vertigo/DC)
70. Robin #49 (DC)
71. Heroes for Hire #7 (Marvel)
72. WildC.A.T.s #44 (WildStorm/Image)
73. Batman Chronicles #11 (DC)
74. Man-Thing #2 (Marvel)
75. Elektra #14 (Marvel)
76. Satana #1 (Marvel)
77. Star Wars: Shadow Stalker (Dark Horse)
78. Mage: The Hero Defined #5 (Image)
79. Teen Titans #15 (DC)
80. DV8 #13 (WildStorm/Image)
81. X-Files: Ground Zero #1 (Topps)
82. Starman #38 (DC)
83. Silver Surfer #135 (Marvel)
84. Teen Titans #16 (DC)
85. Marvel Team-Up #5 (Marvel)
86. Weapon Zero #15 (Top Cow/Image)
87. Aquaman #40 (DC)
88. Legion of Super-Heroes #100 (DC)
89. S. Wars: X-Wing R.S.—In T. Empire's Service #4 (D.H.)
90. Daredevil #371 (Marvel)
91. Venom: Finale #3 (Marvel)
92. Superboy #47 (DC)
93. Azrael #37 (DC)
94. Shi: The Series #4 (Crusade)
95. Coven #4 (Awesome)
96. Shi: Heaven and Earth #3 (Crusade)
97. Shi: East Wind Rain #1 (Crusade)
98. StormWatch #2 (WildStorm/Image)
99. Ash #1 CE (Event)
100. Journey into Mystery #516 (Marvel)

'RETURN' RULES!

• ***Fantastic Four* #1** (No. 1), ***Captain America* #1** (No. 2)—These "Heroes Return" books beat, squashed, clobbered and pistol-whipped traditional "Top 100" leader *Uncanny X-Men* into submission. *FF* did 30 percent more direct-market business than the merry mutants, and *Cap* did 25 percent more. Two groups of readers helped these titles: people who buy Marvels no matter what, and people who said "Hallelujah!" when the alternate-universe "Heroes Reborn" storyline ended, jump-starting these books. Both ways, Marvel gets a shot in the arm.

• ***JLA* #14** (No. 7), ***JLA: Year One* #1** (No. 11), ***JLA: Paradise Lost* #1** (No. 13)—JLA snow-globes! JLA Odor-Eaters! JLA extra-absorbent Depends undergarments! Remember the JLA franchise we mentioned in "Market Watch"? Here it is. Justice League fans were offered *three* titles this month, and all sold big. On *Year One*, writer Mark Waid (*Ka-Zar*) swayed readers, while *Paradise Lost* was boosted by fans' knowledge that lead character Zauriel will join the JLA.

• ***Uncle Sam* #1** (No. 23)—We have met the sugar daddy and he is *U.S.!* *Uncle Sam* shows that readers will show up for their favorite creators regardless of price or lack of superhero characters. Driven by award-winning painter Alex Ross (*Kingdom Come*) with an assist from writer Steve Darnall (*Empty Love Stories*), *Uncle Sam's* $4.95 price tag made it the third-biggest money-maker this month.

• ***WildCORE* #1** (No. 29)—With Backlash and Zealot as main characters, *WildCORE* seems like little more than a second *WildC.A.T.s* title. But the strategy appears to have worked for WildStorm—*WildCORE* #1 debuted handsomely, selling almost twice as many copies as *WildC.A.T.s* this month.

• ***Xena: Warrior Princess* #1** (No. 41)—Xena is very…big…these days. The busty warrior vixen has a devoted mainstream following, which is why *Xena* comics keep placing higher and higher. This title is helped by an alternate photo cover of TV's "Xena" actress Lucy Lawless.

• ***Coven* #4** (No. 95)—Bouncy-bouncy! Most comics sell big with their first issue, then take a hit on #2. You have to wait for issue #4 or #5 to see if things ever come back up. Well, *Coven*'s now bounced back up, and the announcement that this book is moving from mini-series to ongoing monthly status should give it staying power.

ATTENTION COMIC BOOK RETAILERS:

If you're a retailer who would like to participate in our compiling of the *Wizard* Top 100 (and be a candidate for special incentives), please write to us at the address below.

Top 100 Coordinator
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920-2064
or e-mail us at: **WizardTGTC@aol.com**

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WIZARD®

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Denny O'Neil
Doug Moench
Kelley Jones
Alan Grant

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Azrael
Bat Girl
Catwoman
Nightwing
Robin

BAT FILES
Bane
Joker
Man Bat
Ra's al Ghul
Scarecrow

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BULL PEN

Former Mort of the Month Uncle Sam welcomes you to the Miscellaneous *Wizard* Fun Section!

C.B.I.Q.

Games, puzzles and stuff that'll tickle your tummy with the taste of nuts and honey

comic book intelligence quotient

It's "CBIQ" time again! And because this is America, we must test, categorize and label you. We will measure your highly vaunted comic knowledge against our favorite patriotic heroes. The higher your score, the more likely you will get the urge to pledge allegiance to the flag in the middle of your first hour of Civics class. So put that right mitt of yours over your heart and start already.

Score	Rank
0-4	Fighting American, *à la* Simon and Kirby, not Mr. Liefeld..
5-14	Ernie—not the evil one, but the bowl cut-headed sidekick to General Glory.
15-19	American Maid. If anyone can clean up America, it's this gal…we mean woman!
20	Captain America, the ass-kickingest, red, white and blue-wearingest gringo north of the Rio Grande!

1. The Red Skull's original body died of old age, but whose body did he clone for his current body?
A) Captain America
B) Adolf Hitler
C) Crossbones
D) Spider-Man

2. Which Astro City superhero managed to bring the vile Junkman to Justice?
A) Jack-in-the-Box
B) The Hanged Man
C) Jeff Pearlman
D) R.P.M.

3. Impulse's speedster mentor, Max, has been known by all of the following colorful names except:
A) Quicksilver.
B) Max Mercury.
C) The Human Blur.
D) Whip Whirlwind.

4. After that whole Onslaught debacle, where did that rat-bastard Bastion imprison mutant freak Professor Xavier?
A) in an abandoned Sentinel fortress in Australia
B) in an abandoned Hulkbuster base
C) in the abandoned Project Pegasus prison
D) He was held in the closet of Bastion's bedroom with a leather psi-shield over his head; Professor X was from then on known as "the Gimp."

5. According to "Heroes Reborn" continuity, what was the topic of discussion in the missing minutes of President Nixon's White House tapes?
A) a secret alliance between Tricky Dick and Dr. Doom
B) the use of Captain America in clandestine operations
C) the accidental detonation of a gamma bomb in Vietnam
D) some hot moments between the president and a budding young sportscaster by the name of Marvin Albert

6. What kind of animal does the wacky duo of Quantum and Woody have as a mascot?
A) a goldfish
B) a goat
C) a monkey
D) an alien wombat

7. Whose brainwave patterns were originally used to make up the Vision's personality?
A) Ultron
B) Prof. Phineas Horton
C) Wonder Man
D) Liberace

8. What's the name given to the giant Nazi dinosaur who terrorized Lou Martin's town in *Major Bummer*?
A) Blitzkrieg Brontosaur
B) Goosestep Gigantosaurus
C) Tyrannosaurus Reich
D) Apatosaurus *Über Alles*

9. When Spawn was sent to break out the nutty Major Forsberg, who did that crazy major think Spawn was?
A) Genghis Khan
B) Otto Von Bismarck
C) Ivan the Terrible
D) Beppo the Supermonkey

10. Who did party-meister Clark Kent dress up as when he went to Lex Luthor's charity costume party last Halloween?
A) Superman, of course
B) Madman
C) Julius Caesar
D) Batman

11. Who infected Cable with the techno-virus?
A) Apocalypse
B) Mr. Sinister
C) Dark Beast
D) Seven of Nine (And he loved it!)

12. Jack Ryder, a.k.a. the Creeper, had one of those freakish Geraldo-type talk shows. What was the name of this abomination of the airwaves?
A) "Ryder's Q & A"
B) "American Edition"
C) "Ryder's Rogues"
D) "Jack Ryder's Hot Seat"

13. When Fairchild, Grunge and Freefall recently returned to Earth from outer space, they were shocked to find:
A) they had somehow traveled into the future, where every teenager had superpowers like them.
B) they had traveled into the future, where John Lynch was planning to save Earth from aliens—by wiping out humanity.
C) Rainmaker had become a villainess and Burnout had disappeared.
D) the Spice Girls had taken over America and changed the month September to "Spice-ember."

14. Before Hal Jordan wigged out and massacred a plethora of Green Lanterns, what part of the DC Universe was he assigned to safeguard?
A) the Fifth Quadrant
B) Area 51
C) Division 101
D) Sector 2814

15. In the Fox Spider-Man cartoon, who is the Red Skull's son (continuity be damned)?
A) Baron Zemo
B) Electro
C) Scorpion
D) the Redd Foxx

16. Catwoman villain Rafael "Skullface" Cartagena is missing a very important part of his anatomy. What is it?
A) the right elbow
B) a neck
C) his nose
D) "Mr. Sensitive"

17. What company does Max Faraday of *Divine Right* deliver pizza for?
A) Phatboy Phizza
B) Nguyen's Pizza
C) Pizza Dude
D) Zsa-Zsa's 'Za

18. As part of a pact to end a war between the planets Apokolips and New Genesis, what did Darkseid and Highfather exchange?
A) their sons Orion and Scott Free, a.k.a. Mister Miracle
B) the moons that had been in orbit around the two planets
C) the Prime Mother Box for the Source Wall
D) rings and a touching marriage vow

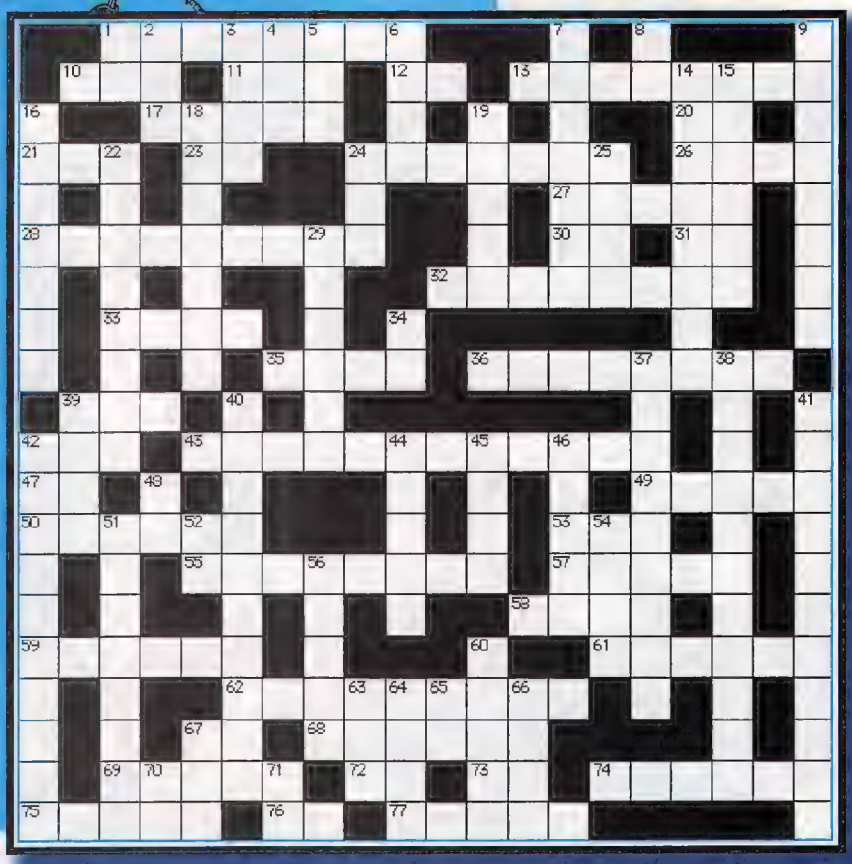
19. In their first meeting with Galactus, what weapon did the Fantastic Four use to threaten the planet-devourer into leaving Earth?
A) the Spear of Destiny
B) the Evil Eye of Avalon
C) the Ultimate Nullifier
D) the Infinity Gems

20. During *Kingdom Come*, what did Superman do after the atomic explosion killed nearly all of the meta-humans?
A) Since most of the meta-bad guys were dead, he decided to retire.
B) He died a slow death as a result of the nuclear radiation.
C) He went nuts and was going to destroy the UN until the good Reverend McCay talked him out of it.
D) He frenched Wonder Woman in the radioactive debris.

WIZARD CROSSWORD

you know, across, down, that sort of stuff

TOO TOUGH?
Don't be a slack-ass.
The answers are on page 198.



ACROSS

1. destroyed Oa, saved Earth
10. Thanagar's Katar ____
11. Entity and Archie's ninja
12. first *Micronauts* artist; initials
13. purple Shi'ar Avenger
17. comics' Lee and Sakai
20. '80s Miller/Sienkiewicz mini-series; init.
21. *World Without* ____
23. *Uncle Sam* painter; init.
24. Estacado's winged foe
26. Quontauka Son of Thunder
27. Arseface's family
28. Mongul destroyed it
30. Green Lantern's roomie's ex-team; init.
31. *Cadillacs & Dinosaurs* comic; init.
32. Tangent Comics' Lobo was this
33. Eugene Milton Judd
35. Legion of Losers' Spider-foe
36. Helena Bertinelli
39. "Is there a Hugh Jass in here?"
42. Superman's ____, Jimmy Olsen
43. god of Acclaim Universe
47. Dr. Doom's chief nemesis; init.
49. *Detective* artist Graham _____
50. "Ghost Detective"; Dr. _____
53. "____ Scuzzlebutt!"
55. Evil Ernie's vampire gal pal
57. Doom Patrol member _____ Jane
58. Parasite leaves you _____
59. starfish-like conqueror
61. played Tasha Yar and Luthor's lover
62. "Hurm."
67. *Terminal City* artist; init.
68. split-personality Alpha Flight heroine
69. Prof. X does this to minds
72. Captain Atom; init.
73. Cruise film-adapting Marvel comic; init.
74. Magneto's "twin" or Deathstroke's son
75. Legion and Superman scribe
76. *Life Story of the Flash* writer; init.
77. Spider-Man's first girlfriend

DOWN

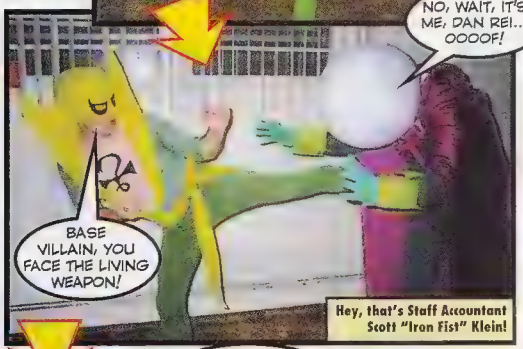
1. artist of Spidey's untold tales; init.
2. Spawn and Sentinel
3. Raven's god
4. co-created the new X-Men
5. Razor publisher; init.
6. Cannonball is one
7. Deviants' home
8. Argent and Risk's team; init.
9. Silver Sable's nation
14. dead Cyberforce leader
15. Earth explorer Cave _____
16. major DC company
18. *Scare* _____
19. 22 down's dog
22. Blind Alfred's roommate
24. Amethyst's alias
25. Doran's *A Distant* ____
29. Metropolis' "terrible" cop
34. Spidey's suds-lovin' semi-pal; init.
37. Gen[13]'s Native-American lesbian
38. Springfield's rival town
39. Spector or Silvestri
40. Genocide's world in Chaos! Universe
41. DC Comics publisher
42. Xavier, Hamilton and Stein
44. what Thing calls Invisible Woman
45. *Daily Planet* reporter Ron Troupe's gal
46. Fighting American's sidekick
48. Master of Kung ___
51. Lt. Shrieve led the _____ Commandos
52. Zoo Crew's "Micro-Mouse"; init.
54. Toy Biz's ex-head honcho
56. Israeli superheroine
60. New Mutants' mind controller
63. Dirk Morgna; ____ Boy
64. Radioactive Man's foe; Dr. _____
65. Spidey's old pal; init.
66. star of *The Dreaming*
67. Resurrection or Pineapple
70. X-Men's Dr. Reyes worked here
71. DC's *Action* guy; init.

3rd Annual Halloween Hoo-Hah!

Wizard Art Assistant Dan Reilly shows why it sucks to be Mysterio...

Wizard Editor Brian Cunningham's bestest bud Dean "Shazam" Galgano

Assistant Price Guide Editor Phil "Moon Knight" Colligan



Hey, that's Staff Accountant Scott "Iron Fist" Klein!

Wizard Specials Editor Doug Goldstein (left) and Circulation Analyst Dan DiGiacomo play dueling Confessors while Staff Writer Matt "Altar Boy" Senreich looks on.

Wizard Editor Brian Cunningham's main squeeze, Jenn Cesca

ToyFare Copy Editor Tom "Walrus Man" Root

Wizard contributing writer Dave "Peter Parker" Borak

Design Manager Steve "Zan" Blackwell and his wife Jennifer, a.k.a. Jayna

Jim "Dogwelder" McLauchlin, and yeah, that's a real acetylene torch and Jim's been drinkin'.

Direct Sales Manager Stewart "Hellboy" Morales and his wife Kelly, a.k.a. "Hellwitch"

*He didn't. That blond mess is Jericho.

Titans together! Top row, l. to r.: Phil "Aqualad" Geller, Mike "Changeling" Fasolo, Pat "Deathstroke" McCallum, Allison "Terra" Thau, Brian "Kid Flash" Cunningham; bottom row, l. to r.: Eileen "Wonder Girl I" Creamer, Arlene "Wonder Girl II" So, Andrew "Jericho" Kardon.

Marc "Preacher" Wilkofsky

Wizard Assistant Editor Andrew Kardon's buddy Steve "Matt Murdock" Nadel and Promotions Manager Ben "Clark Kent" Plavin

InQuest Games Editor Jeff "Captain Pike" Hannes and his lady, Lore "Orion Slave Girl" Stevens

InQuest Editor Mike "Swamp Thing" Searle, the winner of our costume contest

Administrative Assistant Jennifer "Sailor Moon" Cavallo

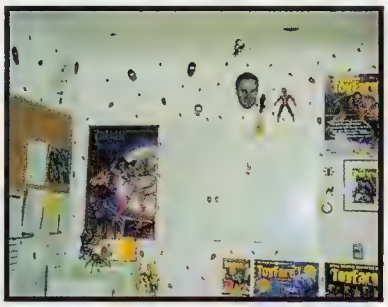
BULL•PEN

Wizard: 2, ToyFare: 0

Back in *Wizard* #76's "Bullpen," we reported on how the copy-editing office of *Wizard* and the central office of *ToyFare*—*Wizard*'s sister toy magazine—were at war. It started with everything in the *Wizard* office turned around—furniture, posters, computers and *everything* facing the wrong way—and escalated to the *ToyFare* office being Saran-wrapped (yeah…the entire office).

The war continued as the *ToyFare* crew entered their office on Monday, October 27, to find it covered with nearly 1,000 photocopied heads—in all shapes and sizes—of *Wizard* staffers Andrew Kardon, Greg Orlando and Marc Wilkofsky (the residents of *Wizard*'s copy-editing office). On the walls, floor, ceiling, desks, computer screens, in rolodexes, even cut into horizontal strips and attached to the Venetian blinds. "It's been over a month since it happened and I'm still finding heads in the strangest places," *ToyFare* Editor Scott Beatty commented. "My DC calendar was seriously violated."

As of press time, with the *Wizard* offices remaining unscathed by retribution, we've proclaimed ourselves the victor. *¡Viva la* Wizard!



Heads up! (And down, and everywhere!)

One of the Damned

Brian Cunningham

editor, Wizard: The Comics Magazine

What do you do at Wizard Press?
I oversee all editorial content in *Wizard* magazine, help plot out each issue, and make sure that each issue is as spiffy as it can be.

Your favorite sections in Wizard?
I'd have to say the features and "Wizard News"—because we're trying to balance hard-core information with entertainment value. I also like "Time Travel," 'cause I'm a history buff.

What surprised you the most about the Wizard offices?
That as quickly as you target someone for a joke, there's a bullseye on *you*.

What's your favorite change to *Wizard* over the years?
My favorite changes involve stuff that readers haven't seen yet. Keep your eyes peeled for issue #80, where *Wizard* takes its next evolutionary step.

Illustration by Jim Cubby

Favorite musician?
I don't have one—I'm pretty musically diverse—I listen to rock, pop, technopop, even some country; I listen to good stuff and some crap.

Favorite books of all time?
It's a three-way tie: *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger, *Jurassic Park* by Michael Crichton, and *The Hot Zone* by Richard Preston. They all opened my eyes to how to be entertained and frightened at the same time.

What hobbies or outside interests do you have?
Playing sports—softball, football, volleyball and hockey—and collecting toys.

Favorite comics right now?
Astro City, JLA, Thunderbolts, Major Bummer, Nightwing and *Robin*; each book entertains me big-time. And I absolutely can't wait to see the new *Avengers* book—these characters deserve Busiek and Pérez!

Favorite comic book story of all time?
Amazing Spider-Man #231-#232, with Spidey vs. Cobra vs. Mr. Hyde—it showed me with amazing clarity what comics can be, and are all about. A balance of action, angst and fun.

What keeps you interested in comics?
It's an amazing medium that most of mainstream America is missing the boat on. When it's done right, it can be done better than any TV show, movie or novel—probably because it combines the best of all of them.

What comic book product would you most like to own?
My Holy Grail would be a piece of original Spider-Man artwork by John Romita Jr. and another by John Romita Sr. They're my all-time favorite Spider-artists.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?
I'd like to be writing comics by that point.

What superpower would you want, and why?
I wouldn't mind having *Major Bummer* character Louis Martin's power of super-strength and super-intelligence; I'd never lose a bar brawl and could balance my checkbook!

WIZARD TOP TEN

Top 10 New Year's resolutions *Wizard* blew in 1997

10. Don't swipe anything when we visit Tommy and Pamela Lee's house, and if we do, don't post it on the Internet.
9. If we can't say anything nice about Rob Liefeld, don't say anything at all (but man, that *Fighting American* sucks).
8. Keep *Magic: The Gathering* tournaments off ESPN2 at all costs!
7. Release our backlog of 50,000 copies of *Turok* #1 into the marketplace, sending prices spiraling down from 15¢ to 14¢.
6. Eat right, exercise, lose 2" off our waists, date more often.
5. Remove "unlimited bar tab" privilege from Jim McLauchlin.
4. Pound more duck!
3. Stop eating the brains of lost children.
2. Gently but firmly remind DC that "theme" annuals and universe-spanning crossovers really suck. (So yeah, Pulp Heroes and *Genesis* were our fault. We're going to Hell.)
1. Fiber. Lots more fiber.

CONTEST WINNERS

SIN CITY, *Wizard* #73: Brian Serafine, Houston, Texas
SPAWN, #73: Bruce Walker, Elmwood Park, N.J.
ALPHA FLIGHT, #74: Scott Bradley of Clearwater, Fla., created this nifty membership card!

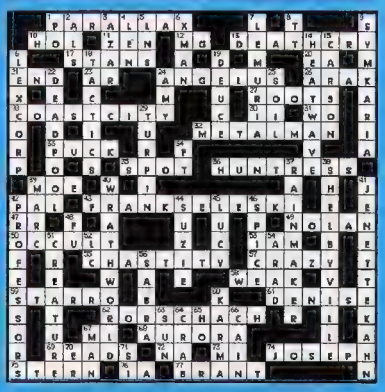
C.B.I.Q. answers...

from page 194

1. A	5. B	9. A	13. B	17. A
2. A	6. B	10. D	14. D	18. A
3. C	7. C	11. A	15. B	19. C
4. B	8. C	12. D	16. C	20. C

CROSSWORD answers...

from page 195



WIZARD
#79
MARVEL COMICS
SILVER SURFER
1/2
ASCENSION
COVER BY
DAVID FINCH
& BATT
X-MEN
COVER BY
CHRIS
BACHALO
FREE
WildStorm
Joe Madureira
J. Scott Campbell
Humberto Ramos
CLIFFHANGER
COMIC BOOK!
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BY PETER SANDERSON

IT'S MILLER TIME!

Frank Miller performed death-defying feats with 'Daredevil' 17 years ago

THEY MISSPELLED HER NAME on the cover of her first appearance. But no one who read *Daredevil* #168 would soon forget the deadly female assassin Elektra, or her creator Frank Miller.

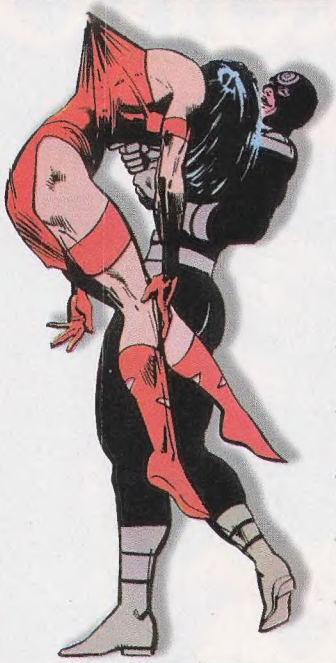
Miller, a relative newcomer to comics, had drawn *Daredevil* since issue #158, increasingly collaborating on the plots with writer Roger McKenzie. Miller added the word "writer" to his credits starting with *Daredevil* #168, cover-dated January 1981, and ol' Horn-head would never be the same. And neither would the comics industry.

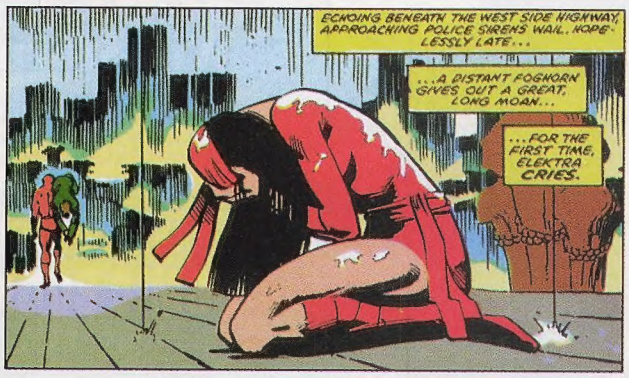
It may have been Miller's cinematic art that helped the poor-selling *Daredevil* shift from bimonthly to monthly status, but it was his unique writing style that pumped new blood into the series and propelled the creator to superstar status. By introducing a heavy crime element, *Daredevil* shifted away from typical costumed supervillains to urban criminal masterminds and crimelords. Likewise, Miller was interested in Japanese comics, and in the tradition of ninjas and samurai, he introduced elements like the ninja group the Hand, the blind, wise *sensei* Stick, and of course, the assassin Elektra. The book's look quickly turned towards a "crime noir" feel and *Daredevil* clearly helped ease comics into the "grim and gritty" trend that still permeates the industry today.

And then there were the second-rate villains that Miller made...well, sensational. The Kingpin, a third-tier Spider-Man foe, had given up crime for a while to spend time with his wife. But Miller got inside Fisk's head, psychologically twisting the mastermind and pushing him back to the top of the East Coast's criminal underworld. Bullseye, once a third-tier DD villain himself, competed with Elektra for Kingpin's #1 assassin job, culminating in one fatal battle in *Daredevil* #181. The psychotic Bullseye brutally murdered Elektra, running her through with her own sai, only to be avenged in bitter combat by a remorseless Daredevil. This absolutely floored fans at a time when comic book deaths were a rarity. (Elektra was later resurrected and currently stars in her own monthly title.)

Upon finishing his run with #191 in 1983, Miller would never write or draw a superhero series on a regular basis again. But he did return to writing DD on several occasions, including the highly praised "Born Again" saga from *Daredevil* #227-#233. In 1986, Miller reached a new echelon of stardom with his mass-media breakthrough of the *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns* mini-series for DC.

Nowadays, Miller's hard-boiled, cinematic style lives on in his Sin City comics at Dark Horse. There, readers find a dangerous city shrouded in shadows and night, alluring and deadly women, and obsessed and driven heroes. Sound familiar? It should, 'cause it was all there in *Daredevil* #168. W





1981 1980 1979 1978 1977 1976 1975 1974 1973 1972 1971 1970 1969 1968 1967 1966 1965 1964 1963 1962 1961 1960

DATELINE: JANUARY 1981

Moviegoers punched the time clock to see *"9 to 5."*...Audiences cracked up as 19-year-old *Eddie Murphy* became a regular on "Saturday Night Live."...CBS' *"The Dukes of Hazzard"* and *"Dallas"* dominated television every Friday night...Blondie's *"The Tide is High"* topped *Billboard*'s music charts....*Ronald Reagan* was sworn in for his first term as U.S. president.

HE'S A ROGUE, AND MAYBE A BIT OF A VILLAIN. TIME WILL CHANGE THAT.

CHRONOS

THE SAGA OF A THIEF IN TIME AND A CITY OUT OF TIME

By John Francis Moore/ Paul Guinan/Steve Leialoha

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